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CONTAINING

LETTERS, WRITTEN FOR COMFORTING THOSE BEREAVED OF CHILDREN AND FRIENDS.

COLLECTED FROM BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS, BY

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AND FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1790.

WITH

SOME ADDITIONS.

PREFACE.

THE design of the following collection is, to prepare the people of God for the loss of children or friends, to support and comfort them under such trials, and to afford them some help in the important duty of comforting one another. I well know, how useful the writings of Flavel, Shaw, Grosvenor, Boston and others, published with this view, have been to many. Yet, in the first paroxysms of grief, a letter may be read, and attended to, when a book would not.

I have been urged by friends, and stimulated by my own convictions, to other and larger publications. But I chose that this labour of love should have the preference. I fully approve the sentiments so well expressed by the late Principal Leechman in his synod sermon: "A genuine feeling of the tender affection due to the afflicted, will not allow us to hesitate one moment, whether that part of our time is most worthily employed, which is taken up in doing real offices of friendship among them; or that part of it which is spent in perusing the finest writings of men of the greatest genius that ever appeared in the world, or in polishing any little compositions of our own. Is the arranging of words, the measuring of periods, the beautifying of language, an employment of equal dignity and importance in itself, or equally pleasant on reflection, with that of comforting a melancholy heart, giving counsel to a perplexed mind, suspending pain, though it were but for a moment, suggesting to an unfurnished mind proper materials for meditation in the time of distress, or laying hold of a favourable opportunity of conveying valuable instructions and re-

ligious impressions to a mind little susceptible of them on other occasions? There is no need of saying any thing in confirmation of this: it was the glorious character of Jesus, that he went about doing good, Many a sorrow might be sweetened and softened, many who sow in tears might reap in joy, if professed Christians knew how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; and especially if ministers of the gospel after the pattern of their Redeemer and Lord, delighted in comforting them that mourn.

Sulpicius and Cicero's letters, which, as elegantly translated by Mr. Melmoth, begin the collection, though among the finest compositions of antiquity, demonstrate how feeble and ineffectual the supports are which the mere light of nature affords, when lover and friend, or child, is taken from us by the stroke of death. The following letters show, how the gospel appoints to them who mourn under such heavy bereavements, beauty for ashes, and for the spirit of heaviness, the garments of praise.

Mr. Howe's letter is published from Calumy's account of his life: and Barker's from Orton's life of Dr. Doddridge. Indeed, the last did not properly fall under the design of this collection, as it was directed, not to one mourning the loss of a friend, but to a worthy clergyman in a declining state of health. But I apprehend its excellency will apologize for giving it a place in this collection.

All the other letters are published from manuscripts.

JOHN ERSKINE.

EDINBURGH,
February 15, 1790.

The letters, following those collected by Dr. Erskine, have been taken from other publications, both of elder and more modern date.

LETTERS,

CHIEFLY WRITTEN TO COMFORT THOSE BEREAVED OF CHILDREN OR FRIENDS.

LETTER I.

From Servius Sulpicius to Cicero.

I RECEIVED the news of your daughter's death with all the concern it so justly deserves: and indeed I cannot but consider it as a misfortune in which I bear an equal share with yourself. If I had been near you when this fatal accident happened, I should not only have mingled my tears with yours, but assisted you with all the consolation in my power. I am sensible, at the same same, that offices of this kind afford at best but a wretched relief: for as none are qualified to perform them, but those who stand near to us by the

ties either of blood or affection, such persons are generally too much afflicted themselves, to be capable of administering comfort to others. Nevertheless, I thought proper to suggest a few reflections which occurred to me upon this occasion : not as imagining they would be new to you, but believing that in your present discomposure of mind, they might possibly have escaped your attention. Tell me then, my friend, wherefore do you indulge this excess of sorrow ? Reflect I entreat you, in what manner fortune has dealt with every one of us : that she has deprived us of what ought to be no less dear than our children, and overwhelmed in one general ruin, our honours, our liberties, and our country. And after these losses, is it possible that any other should increase our tears ? Is it possible that a mind long exercised in calamities so truly severe, should not become totally callous, and indifferent to every event ? But you will tell me, perhaps, that your grief arises not so much on your own account, as on that of Tullia. Yet surely you must often, as well as myself, have had occasion in these wretched times to

reflect, that their condition by no means deserves to be regretted, whom death has gently removed from this unhappy scene. What is there, let me ask, in the present circumstances of our country, that could have rendered life greatly desirable to your daughter? What pleasing hopes, what agreeable views, what rational satisfaction could she possibly have proposed to herself from a more extended period? Was it in the prospect of conjugal happiness in the society of some distinguished youth?* as if, indeed, you could have found a son-in-law amongst our present set of young men, worthy of being entrusted with the care

* This passage seems strongly to intimate, that the marriage between Dolabella and Tullia, was actually dissolved before her death. It must be acknowledged, however, that a very learned and accurate critic is of opinion, that the affirmative side of this question can no more be proved from these words of Sulpicius, than it can be inferred from those which he immediately adds, *an ut ea liberos ex sese pareret*, that Tullia died without issue; which it is well known she did not. But there seems to be this difference between the two instances; that with respect to the latter, Sulpicius might very properly put the question he there does, notwithstanding Tullia's having left a son: for although she had *one*, she might reasonably indulge the expectation of having more. Whereas, with regard to the former, would it not have been highly injurious to her character, if Sulpicius had argued from a supposition which implied that Tullia entertained thoughts of another husband whilst her marriage with Dolabella was still subsisting? *Vid. epist. Tunstal. ad vir. erud. Con. Middleton. p.* 186.

of your daughter! Or was it in the expectation of being the joyful mother of a flourishing race, who might possess their patrimony with independence, who might gradually rise through the several dignities of the state, and exert the liberty to which they were born in the service and defence of their friends and country? But is there one amongst all these desirable privileges, of which we were not deprived before she was in a capacity of transmitting them to her descendants? Yet, after all, you may still allege, perhaps, that the loss of our children is a severe affliction: and unquestionably it would be so, if it were not a much greater, to see them live to endure those indignities which their parents suffer.

I lately fell into a reflection, which as it afforded great relief to the disquietude of my own heart, it may possibly contribute likewise to assuage the anguish of yours. In my return out of Asia, as I was sailing from Ægina towards Megara,* I amused myself with contemplating the circumjacent countries. Be-

* Ægina now called Engia, is an island situated in the gulf that runs between the Peloponnesus and Attica, to which it gives its name. Megara was a city near the isthmus of Corinth.

hind me lay Ægina, before me Megara; on my right I saw Piræeus,† and on my left, Corinth.‡ These cities once so flourishing and magnificent, now presented nothing to my view but a sad spectacle of desolation. "Alas, (I said to myself,) shall such a short-lived creature as man complain, when one of his species falls either by the hand of violence or by the common course of nature, whilst in this narrow compass so many great and glorious cities, formed for a much longer duration, thus lie extended in ruins? Remember then, oh my heart! the general lot to which man is born: and let that thought suppress thy unreasonable murmurs." Believe me, I found my mind greatly refreshed and comforted by these reflections. Let me advise you in the same manner to represent to yourself, what numbers of our illustrious countrymen have lately been cut off at once,‖ how much the strength of the Roman republic is impaired, and what dreadful devastation has gone forth

† A celebrated sea-port at a small distance from Athens, now called Port Lion.

‡ A city in the Peloponnesus. ‖ In the civil wars.

throughout all its provinces! And can you, with the impression of these greater calamities upon your mind, be so immoderately afflicted for the loss of a single individual, a poor, little, tender woman? who, if she had not died at this time, must in a few fleeting years more have inevitably undergone that common fate to which she was born.*

Reasonable, however, as these reflections are, I would call you from them a while, in order to lead your thoughts to others more

* One of the finest and most elegant of all writers, either ancient or modern, has given us some reflections which arose in his mind in walking among the repositories of the dead; which, as they are not altogether foreign to the subject of this letter, the reader perhaps will indulge me in the pleasure of producing them as a sort of corollary to the sentiments of Sulpicius. "When I look upon the tombs of the great," (says the incomparable Addison,) "every emotion of envy dies within me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; when I see kings lying by those who deposed them; when I consider rival wits, placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

Spect. Vol. 1. No. 26.

peculiarly suitable to your circumstances and character. Remember then, that your daughter lived as long as life was worth possessing, that is, till liberty was no more: that she lived to see you in the illustrious offices of prætor, consul, and augur; to be married to some of the noblest youths in Rome;† to be blessed with almost every valuable enjoyment; and at length to expire with the republic itself. Tell me now, what is there in this view of her fate, that could give either her or yourself just reason to complain? In fine, do not forget that you are Cicero; the wise, the philosophical Cicero, who were wont to give advice to others: nor resemble those unskilful empirics, who, at the same time they pretend to be furnished with remedies for other men's disorders, are altogether incapable of finding a cure for their own. On the contrary, apply to your private use those judicious precepts you have administered to the public. Time necessarily weakens the strongest impressions of sorrow: but it would be a reproach to your character

† To Piso, Crassipes, and Dolabella.

not to anticipate this its certain effect by the force of your own good sense and judgment. If the dead retain any consciousness of what is here transacted, your daughter's affection, I am sure, was such, both to you and to all her relations, that she can by no means desire you should abandon yourself to this excess of grief. Restrain it then, I conjure you, for her sake, and for the sake of the rest of your family and friends, who lament to see you thus afflicted. Restrain it too, I beseech you, for the sake of your country, that whenever the opportunity shall serve, it may reap the benefit of your counsels and assistance. In short since such is our fortune, that we must necessarily submit to the present system of public affairs, suffer it not to be suspected, that it is not so much the death of your daughter, as the fate of the republic, and the success of our victors, that you deplore.

But it would be ill manners to dwell any longer upon this subject, as I should seem to question the efficacy of your own good sense. I will only add, therefore, that as we have often seen you bear prosperity in the noblest man-

ner, and with the highest applause; shew us likewise that you are not too sensible of adversity, but know how to support it with the same advantage to your character. In a word, let it not be said, that fortitude is the single virtue to which my friend is a stranger.*

As for what concerns myself, I will send you an account of the state of this province, and of what is transacting in this part of the world, as soon as I shall hear that you are sufficiently composed to receive the information. Farewell.

LETTER II.

From Cicero to Servius Sulpicius.

I JOIN with you, my dear Sulpicius, in wishing you had been in Rome when this most

* Sulpicius has drawn together, in this admired letter, whatever human philosophy has of force to compose the perturbations of a mind under the disquietude of severe afflictions. But it is evident, that all arguments of the sort here produced, tend rather to silence the clamours of sorrow, than to soften and subdue its anguish. It is a much more exalted philosophy indeed, that must supply the effectual remedies for this purpose; to which no other but that of Christianity alone, will be found on the trial to be in any rational degree sufficient.

severe calamity befel me. I am sensible of the advantage I should have received from your presence, and your generous, I had almost said equal, participation of my grief, by having found myself somewhat more composed after I had read your letter. It furnished me indeed with arguments extremely proper to sooth the anguish of affliction; and evidently flowed from a heart that sympathised with the sorrows it endeavoured to assuage. But although I could not enjoy the benefit of your own good offices in person, I had the advantage however of your son's: who gave me a proof, by every tender assistance that could be contributed upon so melancholy an occasion, how much he imagined he was acting agreeably to your sentiments, when he thus discovered the affection of his own. More pleasing instances of his friendship I have frequently received, but never any that were more obliging. As to those for which I am indebted to yourself; it is not only the force of your reasonings, and I had almost said the equal share you take in my afflictions, that have contributed to compose my mind; it is

the deference likewise which I always pay to the authority of your sentiments. For knowing, as I perfectly do, the superior wisdom with which you are enlightened, I should be ashamed not to support my distresses in the manner you assure me I ought. I will acknowledge nevertheless, that they sometimes almost entirely overcome me: and I am scarce able to resist the force of my grief, when I reflect, that I am destitute of those consolations which attended others, whose examples I propose to my imitation. Thus Quintus Maximus* lost a son of consular rank, and distinguished by many brave and illustrious actions; Lucius Paulus† was deprived of two sons in the space of a single week; and your relation

* Quintus Fabius Maximus, so well known for his brave and judicious conduct in opposing the progress of Hannibal's arms in Italy, was five times advanced to the consular office; the last of which was in the year of Rome 545. At the expiration of his fourth consulate, he was succeeded in that office by his son Marcus Fabius, who likewise distinguished himself by his military achievements. It does not appear when, or by what accident Marcus died: but his illustrious father was so much master of his grief upon that occasion, as to pronounce a funeral eulogy in honour of his son, before a general assembly of the people. *Liv.* xxiv. 43. *Plut. in vit. Fab.*

† A very few days before Paulus Æmilius made his public entry into Rome in the year 585, on occasion of his victory

Gallus,* together with Marcus Cato,‡ had both of them the unhappiness to survive their respective sons, who were endowed with the highest abilities and virtues. Yet these unfortunate parents lived in times when the honours they derived from the republic might in some measure alleviate the weight of their private sufferings. But as for myself, after hav-

over Perseus, he had the misfortune to lose one of his sons: and this calamity was succeeded by another of the same kind which befel him about as many days after his triumph. *Liv.* xlv. 41.

* Manutius conjectures, that the person here mentioned, is Caius Sulpicius Gallus, who was consul in the year 586.

‡ The censor. His son was prætor in the year of Rome 638, and died whilst he was in the administration of that office. I cannot forbear transcribing upon this occasion a noble passage from Cicero's treatise concerning old age, as I find it extremely well translated to my hand by a late ingenious writer (Mr. Hughes, if I mistake not) in the Spectator. Our author represents Cato as breaking out into the following rapture at the thoughts of his approaching dissolution: "O happy day," (says this amiable moralist) "when I shall escape from this crowd, this heap of pollution, and be admitted to that divine assembly of exalted spirits! when I shall go—to my Cato, my son; than whom a better man was never born, and whose funeral rites I myself performed, whereas he ought rather to have attended mine. Yet has not his soul deserted me, but, seeming to cast a look on me, is gone before to those habitations to which it was sensible I should follow him. And though I might appear to have borne my loss with courage, I was not unaffected with it; but I comforted myself in the assurance that it would not be long before we should meet again, and be divorced no more." *Pigh. Annal.* ii. 99. *Plut. in vit. Caton. Cic. de Senect.* 23. *Spect. Vol. 7. Numb. 537.*

ing been stripped of those dignities you mention, and which I had acquired by immense labours, I had one only consolation remaining, and of that I am now bereaved! I could no longer divert the disquietude of my thoughts, by employing myself in the causes of my friends or the business of the state; as I could not with any satisfaction appear either in the forum, or the senate. In short I justly considered myself as cut off from all those occupations in which fortune and industry had qualified me to engage. But I considered too, that this was a deprivation which I suffered in common with yourself and some others: and whilst I was endeavouring to break my mind to a patient endurance of those ills, there was one to whose tender offices I could have recourse, and in the sweetness of whose conversation I could discharge all the cares and anxiety of my heart. But this last fatal stab to my peace has torn open those wounds which seemed in some measure to have been tolerably healed. For I can now no longer lose my private sorrows in the prosperity of the commonwealth, as I was wont to dispel the

uneasiness I suffered upon the public account, in the happiness I received at home. Accordingly, I have equally banished myself from my house,* and from the public ; as finding no relief in either, from the misfortunes I lament in both. It is this, therefore, that heightens my desire of seeing you here ; as nothing can afford me a more effectual consolation than the renewal of our friendly intercourse : a happiness which I hope, and am informed indeed that I shall shortly enjoy. Among the many reasons I have for impatiently wishing your arrival, one is, that we may previously concert together our schemes of conduct in the present conjuncture ; which, however, must now be entirely accommodated to another's will. This person,† 'tis true, is a man of great abilities and generosity ; and one, if I mistake not, who is by no means my enemy ; as I am sure he is extremely your friend. Nevertheless it requires much consideration, I do not say in what manner we shall act with respect to public affairs, but

* Cicero, upon the death of his daughter retired, from his own house, to one belonging to Atticus, near Rome : from which, perhaps, this letter was written.

† Cæsar.

by what methods we may best obtain his permission to retire. Farewell.

LETTER III.

From Mr. John Howe, to the Widow of William Lord Russell, who was beheaded in Lincoln's-Inn Fields, 20th July, 1683.

MADAM,

IT can avail you nothing, to let your Honour know from what hand this paper comes; and my own design in it is abundantly answered, if what it contains proves useful to you. Your affliction hath been great, unspeakably beyond what it is in my power or design to represent; and your supports (in the paroxysm of your affliction) have been very extraordinary; and such as wherein all that have observed or heard, could not but acknowledge a divine Hand.

But your affliction was not limited and inclosed within the limits of one black day, nor is like those more common ones, the sense whereof abates and wears off by time; but

is continued, and probably more felt, as time runs on: which therefore makes you need continued help from Heaven every day.

Yet there is here a great difference between what expectations we may have of divine assistance, in the beginning or first violence of some great affliction, and in the continued course of it afterwards. At first we are apt to be astonished, a consternation seizes our thinking faculty, especially as to that exercise of it whereby it should minister to our relief. In this case the merciful God doth more extraordinarily assist such as sincerely trust and resign themselves to him: unto these, as his more peculiar favourites, his sustaining influences are more immediate, and more efficacious, so as even (in the present exigency) to prevent and supersede any endeavour of theirs, whereof they are, then, less capable. And of the largeness and bounty of his goodness, in such a case, few have had greater experience than your Ladyship; which was eminently seen, in that magnanimity, that composure and presentness of mind, much admired by your friends, and no doubt by the

special favour of Heaven afforded you in the needful season: so that while that amazing calamity was approaching, and stood in nearer view, nothing that was fit, or wise, or great was omitted; nothing indecent done. Which is not now said, God knows, to flatter your Ladyship, (whereof the progress will farther vindicate me:) for I ascribe it to God, as I trust your Ladyship, with unfeigned gratitude, will also do. And I mention it, as that whereby you are under obligation to endeavour, your continued temper and deportment may be agreeable to such beginnings.

For now (which is the other thing, whereof a distinct observation ought to be had) in the continuance and settled state of the affliction, when the fury of the first assault is over, and we have had leisure to recollect ourselves, and recover our dissipated spirits, though we are then more sensible of pain and smart, yet also the power of using our own thoughts is restored. And being so, although we are too apt to use them to our greater hurt and prejudice, we are really put again into a capacity of using them to our advantage, which our

good God doth in much wisdom and righteousness require we should do. Whereupon we are to expect his continual assistance for our support under continued affliction, in the way of concurrence and co-operation, with our due use of our own thoughts, aptly chosen, as much as in us is, and designed by ourselves, for our own comfort and support.

Now, as for thoughts suitable to your Honour's case, I have reason to be conscious that what I shall write can make but little accession, I will not say to a closet, but to a mind so well furnished, as you are owner of: Yet I know it is remote from you, to slight a well-intended offer and essay, that really proceeds only from a very compassionate sense of your sorrows, and unfeigned desire to contribute something (if the Father of mercies and the God of all comforts and consolations will please to favour the endeavour) to your relief.

And the thoughts which I shall most humbly offer, will have that first and more immediate design, but to persuade your making use of your own; that is, that you would please to turn and apply them to subjects more apt to

serve this purpose, the moderating of your own grief, and the attaining of an habitual, well-tempered cheerfulness for your remaining time in this world. For I consider how incident it is to the afflicted, to indulge to themselves an unlimited liberty in their sorrows, to give themselves up to them, to make them meat and drink, to justify them in all their excesses, as that, otherwise, good and holy man of God did his anger, and say, they do well to be sorrowful even to the death, and, as another, to refuse to be comforted. And I also consider that our own thoughts must, and will always be the immediate ministers either of our trouble or comfort; though as to the latter, God only is the supreme author, and we altogether insufficient to think any thing that good is, as of ourselves. It is God that comforts those that are cast down, but by our own thoughts employed to that purpose, not without them.

I do not doubt, madam, but if you once fixedly apprehend that there is sin in an overabounding sorrow, you will soon endeavour

its restraint : for I cannot think you would more earnestly set yourself to avoid any thing, than what you apprehend will offend God, especially the doing that in a continued course. Is there any time when joy in God is a duty ? It is very plain the sorrow that excludes it is a sin. How the former may appear to be a duty, and how far, let it be considered.

It is not to be doubted but that he that made us hath a right to rule us ; he that gave us being, to give us law : nor again, that the divine government reaches our minds, and that they are the prime and first seat of his empire. His kingdom is within us. We are not, then, to exercise our thoughts, desires, love, joy, or sorrow, according to our own will, but his ; not as we please, or find ourselves inclined, but suitably to his precepts and purposes, his rules and ends.

It is evident that, withal, the earthly state is mixed, intermediate between the perfect felicity of heaven, and the total misery of hell : and farther, that the temper of our spirits ought to have in it a mixture of joy and sorrow proportionable to our state, or what there is in it of the just occasions or causes of both.

Where christianity obtains, and the gospel of our saviour is preached, there is much greater cause of joy than elsewhere. The visible aspect of it imports a design to form men's minds to gladness, inasmuch as, wheresoever it comes, it proclaims peace to the world, and represents the offended majesty of heaven willing to be reconciled to his offending creatures on earth. So the angel prefaced the gospel, when our Lord was born into the world, *Luke* 2. "I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And so the multitude of accompanying angels sum it up; "Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men."

To them that truly receive the gospel, and with whom it hath its effect, the cause of rejoicing riseth much higher. For if the offer and hope of reconciliation be a just ground of joy, how much more, actual agreement with God, upon the terms of the gospel, and reconciliation itself! "We rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement," *Rom.* v. 11. To such there are express precepts given, "to rejoice in the

Lord always," *Phil.* iv. 4. And lest that should be thought to have been spoken hastily, and that it might have its full weight, that great apostle immediately adds, " and again I say to you rejoice." And elsewhere, " rejoice evermore," 1 *Thess.* v. 16.

Hence therefore the genuine right temper and frame of a truly christian mind and spirit may be evidently concluded to be this, (for such precepts do not signify nothing, nor can they be understood to signify less,) viz. an habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the temporary occasions of sorrow that occur to them. For none can be thought of that can preponderate, or be equal to the just and great causes of their joy. This is the true frame, model and constitution of the kingdom of God, which ought to have place in us; herein it consists, viz. " in righteousness and peace and joy in the holy ghost," *Rom.* xiv. 17.

Nor is there a theory only, or the idea and notion of an excellent temper of spirit, which we may contemplate indeed, but can never attain to. For we find it also to have been the attainment and usual temper of the christians

heretofore, that being justified by faith, and having peace with God, they have rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, unto that degree, as even to glory in their tribulations also, *Rom.* v. 1. 2. 3. And that in the confidence they should be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, they have hereupon greatly rejoiced, though with some mixture of heaviness, whereof there was need, from their manifold trials. But, that their joy did surmount and prevail over their heaviness, is manifest; for this is spoken of with much diminution, whereas they are said to rejoice greatly, and with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 *Pet.* i. 5. 6. 8.

Yea, and such care hath the great God taken for the preserving of this temper of spirit among his people more anciently, than even their sorrow for sin itself (the most justifiable of all other) hath had restraints put upon it, lest it should too long exclude or intermit the exercise of this joy. For when a great assembly of them were universally in tears, upon hearing the law read, and the sense

given, they were forbidden to weep or mourn, or be sorry, because the joy of the Lord was their strength, *Nehem.* viii. 8. 9. 10. That most just sorrow had been unjust, had it been continued, so as to exclude the seasonable turn and alternation of this joy. For even such sorrow itself is not required, or necessary for itself. It is remote from the goodness and benignity of God's ever-blessed nature, to take pleasure in the sorrows of his people, as they are such, or that they should sorrow for sorrow's sake; but only as a means and preparative to their following joy. And nothing can be more unreasonable, than that the means should exclude the end, or be used against the purpose they should serve.

It is then upon the whole most manifest, that no temporary affliction whatsoever, upon one who stands in special relation to God, as a reconciled (and which is consequent, an adopted) person though attended with the most aggravating circumstances, can justify such a sorrow (so deep or so continued) as shall prevail against, and shut out a religious holy joy, or hinder it from being the prevailing principle in

such a one. What can make that sorrow allowable, or innocent, (what event of Providence, that can, whatever it is, be no other than an accident to our christian state) that shall resist the most natural design and end of christianity itself? that shall deprave and debase the truly christian temper, and disobey and violate most express christian precepts? subvert the constitution of Christ's kingdom among men, and turn this earth (the place of God's treaty with the inhabitants of it, in order to their reconciliation to himself, and, to the reconciled, the portal and gate of heaven, yea, and where the state of the very worst and most miserable has some mixture of good in it, that makes the evil of it less than that of hell) into a mere hell to themselves, of sorrow without mixture, and wherein shall be nothing but weeping and wailing?

The cause of your sorrow, madam, is exceedingly great. The causes of your joy are inexpressibly greater. You have infinitely more left than you have lost. Doth it need to be disputed whether God be better and greater than man? or more to be valued,

loved and delighted in? and whether an eternal relation be more considerable than a temporary one? Was is not your constant sense in your best outward state, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God, and whom can I desire on earth, in comparison of thee!" *Psal.* lxxiii. 25. Herein the state of your ladyship's case is still the same, if you cannot rather with greater clearness, and with less hesitation pronounce those latter words. The principal causes of your joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter. You have lost a most pleasant, delectable earthly relative. Doth the blessed God hence cease to be the best and most excellent good? Is his nature changed? his everlasting covenant reversed and annulled? which is ordered in all things and sure, and is to be all your salvation and all your desire, whether he make your house on earth to grow or not to grow, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 4. That sorrow which exceeds the proportion of its cause, compared with the remaining true and real causes of rejoicing, is in that excess causeless; i. e. that excess of it wants a cause, such as can justify or afford defence unto it.

We are required, in reference to our nearest relations in this world, when we lose them, to weep as if we wept not, as well as when we enjoy them, to rejoice as if we rejoiced not, because our time here is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29. 30. 31. We are finite beings, and so are they. Our passions in reference to them must not be infinite, and without limit, or be limited only by the limited capacity of our nature, so as to work to the utmost extent of that, as the fire burns, and the winds blow, as much as they can: but they are to be limited by the power, design and endeavour of our reason and grace (not only by the mere impotency of our nature) in reference to all created objects. Whereas in reference to the infinite, uncreated good, towards which there is no danger or possibility of exceeding in our affection, we are never to design to ourselves any limits at all; for that would suppose we had loved God enough, or as much as he deserved, which were not only to limit ourselves, but him too; and were a constructive denial of his infinite, immense

goodness, and consequently of his very godhead. Of so great concern it is to us, that in the liberty we give our affections, we observe the just difference which ought to be in their exercise towards God and towards creatures.

It is also to be considered, that the great God is so pleased to condescend, as himself to bear the name, and sustain the capacity of our nearest earthly relations; which implies that what they were to us, in this or that kind, he will be in a transcendent and far more noble kind. I doubt not but your ladyship hath good right to apply to yourself those words of the prophet, *Isa.* lvi. 5. Thy maker is thy husband, &c. Whereupon, as he infinitely transcends all that is delectable in the most excellent earthly relation, it ought to be endeavoured, that the affection placed on him should proportionably excel. I cannot think any person in the world would be a more severe or impartial judge of a criminal affection than your ladyship: or that it would look worse unto any eye, if any one should so deeply take to heart the death of an

unrelated person, as never to take pleasure more, in the life, presence, and conversation of one most nearly related. And you do well know that such an height, or that supremacy, of affection, as is due to the ever blessed God, cannot, without great injury, be placed any where else. As we are to have none other God before him ; so him alone we are to love with all our heart and soul, and might and mind.

And it ought farther to be remembered, that whatsoever interest we have or had in any the nearest relative on earth, his interest, who made us both, is far superior. He made us and all things primarily for himself, to serve great and important ends of his own : so that our satisfaction in any creature is but secondary and collateral to the principal design of its creation.

Which consideration would prevent a practical error and mistake that is too usual with pious persons afflicted with the loss of any near relation, that they think the chief intention of such a providence is their punishment.

And hereupon they are apt to justify the utmost excesses of their sorrow, upon such an occasion, accounting they can never be sensible enough of the divine displeasure appearing in it; and make it their whole business, or employ their time and thoughts beyond a due proportion, to find out and fasten upon some particular sin of theirs, which they may judge God was offended with them for, and designed now to punish upon them. It is indeed the part of filial ingenuity, deeply to apprehend the displeasure of our father, and an argument of great sincerity, to be very inquisitive after any sin for which we may suppose him displeased with us, and apt to charge ourselves severely with it, though perhaps, upon utmost inquiry, there is nothing particularly to be reflected on, other than common infirmity incident to the best, (and it is well when at length we can make that judgment, because there really is no more, not for that we did not inquire,) and perhaps also God intended no more in such a dispensation, as to what concerned us in it, than only, in the general, to

take off our minds and hearts more from this world, and draw them more entirely to himself. For, if we were never so innocent, must therefore such a relative of ours have been immortal? But the error in practice, as to this case, lies here; not that our thoughts are much exercised this way, but too much. We ought to consider, in every case, principally, that which is principal. God did not create this or that excellent person, and place him for a while in the world, principally to please us; nor therefore doth he take him away, principally to displease or punish us; but for much nobler and greater ends, which he hath proposed to himself concerning him. Nor are we to reckon ourselves so little interested in the great and sovereign Lord of all, whom we have taken to be our God, and to whom we have absolutely resigned and devoted ourselves, as not to be obliged to consider and satisfy ourselves, in his pleasure, purposes, and ends, more than our own, apart from his.

Such as he hath pardoned, accepted, and prepared for himself, are to serve and glorify

him in an higher and more excellent capacity, than they ever could in this wretched world of ours, and wherein they have themselves the highest satisfaction. When the blessed God is pleased in having attained and accomplished the end and intendments of his own boundless love, (too great to be satisfied with the conferring of only temporary favours in this imperfect state,) and they are pleased in partaking the full effects of that love; who are we, that we should be displeased? or that we should oppose our satisfaction to that of the glorious God, and his glorified creature? Therefore, madam, whereas you cannot avoid to think much on this subject, and to have the removal of that incomparable person, for a great theme of your thoughts, I do only propose most humbly to your honour, that you would not confine them to the sadder and darker part of that theme. It hath also a bright side; and it equally belongs to it, to consider whither he is gone, and to whom; as whence, and from whom. Let, I beseech you, your mind be more exercised in contemplating the glories of that state your blessed

consort is translated unto, which will mingle pleasure and sweetness with the bitterness of your afflicting loss, by giving you a daily intellectual participation (through the exercise of faith and hope) in his enjoyments. He cannot descend to share with you in your sorrows; you may thus every day ascend, and partake with him in his joys. He is a pleasant subject to consider. A prepared spirit made meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified, and with the saints in light, now entered into a state so connatural, and wherein it finds every thing most agreeable to itself. How highly grateful is it to be united with the true centre, and come home to the Father of Spirits! To consider how pleasant a welcome, how joyful an entertainment he hath met with above! How delighted an associate he is with the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect! How joyful an homage he continually pays to the throne of the celestial King!

Will your ladyship think that an hard saying of our departing Lord to his mournful

disciples, " If ye loved me, ye would rejoice that I said, I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I." As if he had said, he sits enthroned in higher glory than you can frame any conception of, by beholding me in so mean condition on earth. We are as remote, and as much short in our thoughts as to the conceiving the glory of the Supreme King, as a peasant, who never saw any thing better than his own cottage, from conceiving the splendour of the most glorious Prince's court. But if that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, be much accustomed to its proper work and business, the daily delightful visiting and viewing the glorious invisible regions; if it be often conversant in those vast and spacious tracts of pure and brightest light, and amongst the holy inhabitants that replenish them; if it frequently employ itself in contemplating their comely order, perfect harmony, sublime wisdom, unspotted purity, most fervent mutual love, delicious conversation with one another, and perpetual pleasant consent in their adoration and observance of

their eternal King! who is there to whom it would not be a solace to think I have such and such friends and relatives (some perhaps as dear as my own life) perfectly well pleased, and happy among them! How can your love, madam, so generous a love towards so deserving an object, how can it but more fervently sparkle in joy, for his sake, than dissolve in tears for your own!

Nor should such thoughts excite over-hasty impatient desires of following presently into heaven, but to the endeavours of serving God more cheerfully on earth, for our appointed time: which I earnestly desire your ladyship would apply yourself to, as you would not displease God, who is your only hope, nor be cruel to yourself, nor dishonour the religion of christians, as if they had no other consolations than this earth can give, and earthly power take from them. Your ladyship, if any one, would be loth to do any thing unworthy your family and parentage. Your highest alliance is to that Father and family above, whose dignity and honour are, I doubt not, of highest account with you.

I multiply words, being loth to lose my design: and shall only add that consideration, which cannot but be valuable with you, upon his first proposal, who had all the advantages imaginable to give it its full weight; I mean, that of those dear pledges left behind. My own heart even bleeds to think of the case of those sweet babes, should they be bereaved of their other parent too: and even your continued visible dejection would be their unspeakable disadvantage. You will always naturally create in them a reverence of you; and I cannot but apprehend how the constant mein, aspect, and deportment of such a parent, will insensibly influence the temper of dutiful children; and, if that be sad and despondent, depress their spirits, blunt and take off the edge and quickness, upon which their future usefulness and comfort will much depend. Were it possible their now glorious father should visit and inspect you, would you not be troubled to behold a frown in that bright serene face? You are to please a more penetrating eye, which you will best do, by putting on a temper and deportment suitable to

your weighty charge and duty, and to the great purposes for which God continues you in the world, by giving over unnecessary solitude and retirement, which, though it pleases, doth really prejudice you, and is more than you can bear. Nor can any rules of decency require more. Nothing that is necessary and truly christian, ought to be reckoned unbecoming. David's example, 2 *Sam.* xii. 20. is of too great authority to be counted a pattern of indecency. The God of heaven lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and thereby put gladness into your heart; and give you to apprehend him saying to you, Arise, and walk in the light of the Lord.

That I have used so much freedom in this paper, I make no apology for; but do therefore hide myself in the dark, not judging it consistent with that plainness which I thought the case might require, to give any other account of myself, than that I am one deeply sensible of your, and your noble relatives great affliction, and who scarce ever bow the knee before the mercy-seat, without remembering it; and who shall ever be, madam,

your ladyship's most sincere honourer, and most humble devoted servant.

LETTER IV.

From the Reverend Mr. John Barker, to Dr. Doddridge, July 1751.

SIR,

LESSINGHAM, Neal, and Barker, are too nearly interested in that precious life, which now appears in danger of being cut off in the midst of its days, to hear of its waste and languishing without great concern and fervent prayer to God. How your letter affected my heart in public, your friends are witness: but what I felt for my dear brother, and the ministers and churches of Christ, God and myself only know. I will not now say, Why did you spend so fast? Why did you not spare yourself a little sooner? I will rather heartily thank you, that you use all the means you can to repair your frame, and restore and prolong your usefulness. It is the kindest thing you can do, and the highest instance of friendship you can now show us; and I acknowledge your goodness to us in

this point, with tears of joy. Consent, and choose to stay with us a while longer, my dear friend, if it please God. This is not only needful to Northampton and its adjacent towns and villages, but desirable to us all, and beneficial to our whole interest. Stay, Doddridge, O stay, and strengthen our hands, whose shadows grow long. Fifty is but the height of vigour, usefulness, and honor. Do not take leave abruptly. Providence hath not directed thee yet on whom to drop thy mantle. Who shall instruct our youth, fill our vacant churches, animate our associations, and diffuse a spirit of piety, moderation, candour, and charity through our villages and churches; and a spirit of prayer and supplication into our towns and cities, when thou art removed from us? Especially, who shall unfold the sacred oracles, teach us the meaning and use of our Bibles, rescue us from the bondage of systems, party-opinions, empty, useless speculations, and fashionable forms and phrases; and point out to us the simple, intelligible, consistent, uniform religion of our Lord and Saviour? Who shall——But I am silenced

by the voice of Him, who says, " Shall I not do what I will with my own ? Is it not my prerogative to take and leave, as seemeth me good ? I demand the liberty of disposing of my own servants at my own pleasure. He hath laboured more abundantly. His times are in my hand. He hath not slept as do others. He hath risen to nobler heights than things below. He hopes to inherit glory. He hath laboured for that which endureth to eternal life ; labour, which, the more it abounds, the more it exalts and magnifies its object, and the more effectually answers and secures its end.—It is yours to wait and trust ; mine to dispose and govern.—On me be the care of ministers and churches : with me is the residue of the spirit.—Both the vineyard and the labourers are mine.—I set them to work, and, when I please, I call them and give them their hire."——With these thoughts my passions subside,—my mind is softened and satisfied :—I resign thee, myself, and all, to God, saying, Thy will be done !——But now for the wings of faith and contemplation. Let me take thy hand, my dear brother, and

walk a turn or two in yonder spacious regions. Yes, it is so ; we read it in the book of God, that word of truth and gospel of our salvation —that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The one ruined his posterity by sin ; the other raised his seed to immortality. This poisoned the dart, and inflamed the wound of death ; but Jesus Christ redeemeth us from this captivity. See, thou christian minister, thou friend of my bosom, and faithful servant of God, see the important period, when the surprising signs and descending inhabitants of Heaven, proclaim the second coming of our divine Saviour ! The heavens open, and disclose his radiant glory.—Hear the awakening trump. —See, the dead in Christ arise glorious and immortal—leave corruption, weakness, and dishonour behind them, and behold their Lord and Head seated on his throne of judgment, attended and surrounded with the ministers of his power and pleasure, and shining in all the fulness of celestial glory,—and not only see, but share his victory and lustre,—partake of

his image and influence. And behold the demolished fabrick reared again, stately and ornamented—shining and illustrious—permanent and durable—to demonstrate how entirely death is vanquished, all its ruins repaired; and what was once meat for worms is now a companion of angels. For when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, every eye will be fastened on the mighty conqueror, and every voice and harp be tuned for that transporting song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Yes, Doddridge, it is so. The fruit of our Redeemer's sufferings and victory is the entire and eternal destruction of sin and death. And is it not a glorious destruction? a most blessed ruin? No enemy so formidable—no tyrant so bitter—no fetters so heavy and galling—no prison so dark and dismal—but they are vanquished and disarmed;—the unerring dart is blunted and broken—the prison pulled down and razed. Our Lord is risen, as "the first fruits of them that slept."————————How glad should I be to hear, that God is pleased to

prolong thy life on earth, to declare these glorious truths, and teach us to improve them! In this, your friends with you, and many more in every place, join, and make it our common petition to the great disposer of all events. Use every means you can for the recovery of your health, for the sake of your friends, among whom is

your faithful and affectionate

J. BARKER.

The doctor was so affected and melted into tears of gratitude and joy, with the friendship this letter expressed, and the divine consolations which it administered, that it was apprehended his tender frame would have sunk under it.

LETTER V.

From William Stevenson of Barbeth, to the Reverend Mr. Adam, first Minister of Dalrymple, afterwards of Falkirk.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I REMEMBER I was a stranger in the land of Egypt, and know something of the

heart of a stranger. I therefore humbly desire to cast in my mite of christian sympathy with you and your kind spouse, under that afflicting dispensation, the death of your dear children. You will readily grant, I have drunk deeper in that cup than you have yet done, having only of seven pleasant, healthful and hopeful children one little girl left; having laid in a grave three sons and three daughters, all of an endearing age, four of them between fifteen and twenty years. But the cup which our heavenly father hath given us, shall we not drink it? That God, who sets the solitary in families like a flock, and diminishes them at pleasure, gives us wives like unto fruitful vines, and children like unto olive plants about our tables. How ready were we then to say in our prosperity, we should not be moved, we should die in our nest, our seed and offspring should be powerful in the earth, and blessed among the generation of the upright, useful servants of God and their generation, nourishers of our old age, and everlasting preservatives of our memorial!

But we have now laid them in a grave. These lately pleasant bodies say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, my sister and brother. With them we have buried a great part of our worldly comforts, hopes and projects. O, what a dark vail doth death and the grave cast on all human glory! It cannot descend after them into the dust.

We return from the grave to our house. There perhaps we find a Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are not. Here an empty coat, there an empty bed. We sit down at our table. The olive plants are missing. The wind hath passed over the flowers, and they are gone. These beautiful lambs, that used to play through our houses and fields, and sweetly divert us with their familiar conversations and loving embraces, we see no more. Death hath torn them from our bosoms; and fears as to their eternal state, and reflections as to our duty towards them, may crown the melancholy scene.

Yet, let us not dwell too much on such thoughts, lest a wounded spirit, like a sharp

knife, cut the thin sheath of our frail bodies, and disable us in body or mind from our duty to God or man. Especially let us beware of any hard thoughts of God, and still acknowledge that he is righteous, and in faithfulness hath afflicted. Let us turn our complaints upon ourselves, and say, "We have sinned, what shall we do unto thee? Wherein we have done foolishly, we will do so no more. The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also? It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Good is the will of the Lord."

But we are called, not to sorrow as those who have no hope. To the true Israelite, within the bond of God's covenant, a brighter side of the cloud may appear, and he may justly rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let us enter into our closet, the proper place for giving vent to our lawful passions, and where I have experienced the greatest relief: there, having offered the sacrifice of moderate sorrow and contrition, especially for sin, which

brought death into the world, let us, upon the wing of faith, see with faith's eye the blessedness of the dead in Christ, rejoice in their joy, and triumph with God's inheritance. Let us view our dead relations and children, concerning whom we hope, in the good-will of God to men, that they were chosen of the father, redeemed by the son, sanctified by the holy spirit. Let us view them in the covenant and promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;" in Christ's invitation to come to him, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Let us view them by us devoted to God, ingrafted into Christ, and sealed to eternal life by baptism. Let us view these olive plants, transplanted from the stormy barren soil of this world, into the heavenly paradise, and flourishing in the courts of the New Jerusalem. Let us view these pleasant lambs eating the fruit of the tree of life, and drinking the waters of the river that flows from beneath the throne of God and of the lamb. Let us view them in the bosom of the good shepherd, who gave his

life for the sheep, and carries the lambs in his bosom. Let us view them in Abraham's bosom; and why not in the bosom of their more immediate parents and relations now in heaven. Let us view not only their angels who ministered to them here on earth, and carried their souls to glory; but even themselves beholding the face of their heavenly father, admiring and worshipping him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Let us behold, following the lamb wheresoever he goeth, those virgins not defiled with the pollutions of a world, no guile found in their mouth, and their robes washed and made white in the blood of the lamb. Let us view their bodies spiritual, immortal, incorruptible, made like to Christ's glorious body, joyfully united to their souls, now satisfied with the likeness and with the full enjoyment of God. If many descriptions of the heavenly glory are metaphorical, in this the wisdom and condescension of God appear: for how otherwise should we conceive those things in our present state and capacity? But that glory infinitely exceeds all metaphors, and is a glory yet to be revealed.

Unbelief in our hearts may object, These are mysterious and great things, hard to be believed and hoped for by poor sinful mortals. True ; though great, yet not too great to display the infinite glory and perfections of God. They are mysterious enough to confound all the mere natural, rational and moral schemes in the world ; and, as to a great part of them, could never have been known or believed, without the light and assistance of that word and spirit of God, which have brought life and immortality to light, and are as the sun to the spiritual world. It is true many invisible things of God are clearly manifested by the things that are seen ; and the light of nature condemns the world for want of a faith and practice suitable to the evidence it affords. But, let us not separate what God hath joined together, his word and works. Do not his glorious perfections equally shine in both ? Do they not mutually illustrate one another ? A wonderful likeness between the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace, teaches us many fundamental and difficult doctrines of our christian faith. Is not the resurrection

from the dead taught us every morning we rise from sleep; and every spring, when vegetative nature, which has been dead through the winter, revives? Are we not taught the immortality of the soul, and its acting in a separate state, by our dreams? The spirit (no doubt only in its imaginations) runs through the universe. It hears, sees, feels and exercises all the bodily senses. It fears, grieves, loves, joys and exercises all its own faculties, when the body lies in a deep sleep. It does all this in such a manner as our reason can now no more comprehend, than we can a real separate state. Is not all nature adapted to teach us God and spiritual things, and continually improved for that end by the divine oracles? Every employment, merchandise, husbandry, &c.; every work, building, ploughing, sowing, digging, &c.; every member of our body, hands, feet, eyes, illustrate the divine perfections and operations. But the mysteries of God's word are to be admired and adored by us, as well as those of his works. Further discoveries of them are reserved, till the day-spring from on high

arise upon us: and no doubt many of them will remain mysteries to all eternity.

I fear I have been tedious, and have darkened counsel by words without knowledge: but, seeing our Lord commands us to comfort ourselves, and to comfort one another with these his words, I have laid before you these confused hints, hoping they shall receive a favourable reception, construction and correction, being offered by a willing mind and according to what a man hath. May the chief comforter come unto you, and abide with you! [May he bring meat out of this eater, and sweet out of this strong trial!]

LETTER VI.

From the Reverend Mr. Muir, Cumnock, to Miss N——, occasioned by her Father's death, 17th December 1758.

MADAM,

YOUR present trial arises from what is the true commencement of your father's triumph and perfection. Taking the dispensation in this point of light, to grieve and to sin would

be the same : For, if we rejoice at the conversion of sinners, why be sorrowful at the glorification of saints ?

Yet I am aware, that your loss, abstractly considered, is a source of distress. It would be impiety to feel no sorrow ; and an attempt to reason you out of it, would be fruitless and foolish. Far from endeavouring this, I would rather mingle my tears with yours. However culpable the after conduct of Job's friends, I have often admired the propriety of their first interview with him. Instead of beginning with arguments of a comforting nature, like men of tender feelings, and who wished to bear their friends burden, they lifted up their voice and wept, and none spake a word to him, for they saw his grief was very great. Grief hath a period wherein expressive silence is the truest sympathy.

Yet constitutional differences may render different applications needful for the same disease ; and grounds of encouragement simply suggested, may have some influence, even in such circumstances.

Need I suggest, as (where suitably improv-

ed) the infallible specific in all such cases that, 'the Lord liveth?' Whatever comforts we enjoy, are they not all derived from, and dispensed and continued by him? What though particular effects be removed? The glorious cause remains; and remains as willing to help, ready to uphold and capable of administering to our needs as ever. It is the Lord who renders comforts comforting to us; and, if he makes the breasts of the creature in our view run dry, can he not open other sources, even of creature-consolation? Yes, though he should open them in rocks, whence they may be least expected.—Or can he not, by such dispensations, wean the soul from creatures, and make the whole desire terminate in himself; in whom is all we can need, all we can wish, all we can enjoy? Having him, we have all: without him the creation itself (the things in it we most esteem not excepted,) would be a poor, a puny, a miserable all. Does he live? What then of the christian's hope and comfort can die? What deduction can take place from their happiness and portion? Nay, madam, the very death of crea-

ture comforts, is an evidence that the Lord liveth, and a consequence of it. As the tender-hearted parent of his ransomed family, he weighs all their pains and all their pleasures in an even balance, without permitting the one or the other to exceed the precise degrees which to infinite wisdom, sovereign goodness, everlasting love, seem best for each of them. In the execution of his fatherly plan, particular members of his family may feel present anxiety and tribulation: yet, the consideration of his hand in it, and that he liveth, should have a sweetly-silencing influence, making us, with reason, hold our peace, or, with Eli, say, "It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth."—I am sensible these things are sooner said than done. But the Lord liveth, the source of covenant-grace, for directing and enabling to such exercise, all the weary travellers of hope.

The crowning ingredient in this cup of christian consolation, is the blessed assurance, "and because I live, ye shall live also." So said our dear Immanuel; and as sure as he said it, he will perform unto all his servants,

that word of grace, upon which he now causes them to hope. Many circumstances in the christian's lot wear at present a death-like aspect, and blessings come under such disguise, that the love of a father, the grace of a saviour, and the accomplishment of the promise, are not discovered in them. But, because the lord liveth, these very circumstances, death-like as they are, shall contribute towards their spiritual life, and, to each of them singly, issue in life eternal. Then the former things will be done away, and the immediate visions of Jesus shall banish every feeling of pain from any remembrance of former sorrow. Then all the children of the kingdom shall meet, and shall live with their living Lord, no more to part from, or to pain one another, to eternity. O life truly divine! how happy the people! how happy the person who is in such a case! how happy they, whose God is the Lord! May your father's God be your God for ever and ever, and your guide even unto death!

LETTER VII.

From Mr. H. Davidson, Minister of the Gospel at Galashiels, to Mr. William Hog, Merchant, Edinburgh, on occasion of the death of Mr. G. Wilson, Minister at Maxton. Dated 23d February, 1750.

OUR Lord puts his children in full possession of the heavenly blessings; but it is not usually till after some time of painful service and suffering. Hereby there is a sufficient time for the trial and exercise of their several graces. These holy principles, this divine seed, would be sown in their hearts to no purpose, and God would have no harvest of glory from them, were they immediately caught up into heaven.

But further, this is wisely deferred for a season, that the world may be edified, and the honour and interest of Christ in it may be promoted by them. The world is not worthy of them, but it greatly needs them.

God has fixed his time, and invariably keeps to it. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." As a wise father, he assigns the time when his children, who are

on their travels for their improvement in this foreign country, shall return home. He alone gives the sailing-orders for the vessels bound for Immanuel's land, directs all their stations, overrules and manages all their storms, conducts the whole voyage, and assigns the time for each of the vessels being laid up in a safe harbour.

And to be sure, his time of removing his people to heaven is the best. In due time we shall reap, if we faint not; and there is no room to doubt of it, when we consider his infinite wisdom, and the tender affection he bears to his children.

The death of our gracious friends should wean our hearts from the world they have left. When we consider how many valuable christians are taken away out of public and private stations, it makes one almost sick at the thoughts of living in a world behind them.

Death proclaims the imperfections of the best mortals, and that they are but men. How useful, and how significant, and how desirable soever our friends may have been,

earth cannot be the stage of immortal friendship.

LETTER VIII.

From Ditto to Mr. Thomas Davidson, Minister of Braintree, 22d Feb. 1750, on the same occasion.

TO the shame of our selfishness be it spoken, how loth are we to make an exchange of a friend on earth for one in heaven! A great man and a peer is fallen in our Israel. When we are mourning, we must not murmur. It becomes rather to adore God for making him so great, without which we should not have had the occasion to mourn; and that he continued him so long capable of performing so many acceptable and honourable services to the church of God.

As our world loses by the death of eminent saints, the other gains by it. They fall in our world, to rise more illustrious there. Could we trace them exulting before the throne of God, and of the lamb, triumphing in our blessed redeemer, in immortal youth and vigour, freed from all disorder of body and

mind for ever; could we discover how bright they shine, how ardently they love, how humbly they adore; and could we hear the melody of their songs; it would soon make us weary of this sinning vain world, and adopt these words in an allowable sense, Let us also go, that we may die with them.

You may easily, dear sir, imagine how this loss affects me, and that in a very tender part. An able and judicious, an affectionate and constant friend for upwards of thirty-five years! My two dearest friends on earth, before me in every thing that was good and valuable, have likewise got to heaven before me, and left to poor me the sinning, sighing part, while they are joined to the spirits made perfect in knowledge, holiness and joy. However well pleased our Lord and the saints are in one another, upon the change that death makes, it is not easy to make us pleased too, and cordially wish them joy of their new dignity and elevation. Their sentiments are different. Their affections are raised and ennobled; and, as well as they loved us, they

would not come back to us for a thousand worlds. Upon their entrance into heaven, we may reasonably suppose their first wish is, O that I had been sooner here; and their next wish is, for our being with them as soon as may be. The saints are Christ's friends, as well as ours; and we must allow him his blessed will, *John* xvii. 24, to have his friends about him, as well as we have had them so long; and it may be, before Christ has had them so long with him as some of us have had them here below, we will be with them again, and Christ, and they, and we, be all together! O, what a happy meeting! They and we freed of all natural and sinful infirmities! There the communion of saints is in perfection, and this blessed society shall never break up or separate. No parting salutation there. The word farewell is no part of the heavenly language.

Now, my dear friend, when our Lord takes away our gracious, eminently useful friends, and public blessings, we must learn to translate our affection and dependence from earth to heaven, from these short-lived and uncer-

tain supports, to the living God ; and as our eye is directed to, and fixed upon him, we shall be composed and comforted, even when Providence has set us down among the tombs. We are called to mourn ; but not as without hope, not as if Christ's interest was to sink and die with them. No ; its stability depends not on any mortal, but upon him that said, " I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." Christians die, and ministers die ; but the word of the Lord dieth not, but liveth for ever. It is good news, that though the earthen vessel is broken, the heavenly treasure is not lost, and buried in the grave. O ! to be taught of God, to look up to him, who has the seven spirits of God, to supply all our wants, to heal the wide breaches that are made from time to time. The weaker the poor instruments are that are left, the excellency of the power will be more of God.

LETTER IX.

From the late Reverend Mr. Thomas Randall, to Mrs. William Hog, dated Inchture, 7th March, 1760.

MADAM,

YESTERDAY, by a letter from Mr. Wallace, I understand it hath pleased the sovereign disposer of all things to afflict your family and friends in the death of Mr. Thomas Hog's son. It was natural for me, who had so lately tasted of that bitter cup, to have a fellow-feeling with you all in that distress. No temptation for the present is joyous; and I know that kind of trial to be grievous. I have had spoilings of these pleasant things often; and found it hard to tell, whether the separation of the younger or of the elder branches be most wounding to the root. Each have their peculiar anguish.—When grown a little up, our hopes being heightened, we have great downcastings. Yet in the younger shoots, fresher from the womb, more is felt, of what is so strikingly expressed, *Isa.* 49. "Can a woman forsake her sucking child?" as if these were hardest to forsake.—

In my sympathy on such an occasion, rather than attempt to lighten sorrow by insisting on the youth of the child, or mentioning the hope of future offspring to alleviate it, I would allow the cause of anguish to be truly great; and I would seek to introduce cheerfulness and joy in the midst of such scenes of darkness and heaviness, only from that true source of all joy and consolation, the unchangeable and everlasting gospel, which turns all our darkness into light, our sorrows into joys. I cannot see from reason, what satisfaction men can have on the birth of children, in a world which they and all their fathers have found so vain and vexing; and I am sure in their death one gleam of comfort springs not up: like their grave, all is darkness and consumption. It is from religion, and from the blessed scriptures, we are instructed in the grounds of rejoicing at births. Thence we are let into the connexion the blessed God has with our infants; that *to please us*, by calling them *ours*, is but a very subordinate reason for their being born; and that to be a part of his inheritance and glory, who became an infant of

days, and to show *his* sovereignty, who calls these things that are not, to be, and to be for ever with himself, while the mighty are cast down, are the high reasons of bringing millions into the world, who abide not in it till they know the right hand from the left, or discern between good and evil. And it is therefore from religion, and from the blessed scriptures, we are instructed also to see, that *to grieve us*, is often but a very subordinate reason for consigning them so early to the silent grave.—This is the passage by which the sovereign of all determines even they shall be brought to his presence and joy, and this the time of his calling for them. Oh! what brightness does this throw upon our shades, our darkest shades, when our dear infants are torn from our yearning bowels, and laid to rottenness and silence; and the friends and parents believing in the second Adam and his merciful father, not staggering at the promises of that covenant, where the interests of children are remembered, and well ordered and sure, as well as their own; but being strong in faith, give God glory about them, by be-

lieving he can give them spiritual life, and resurrection from the dead, by that power which called Isaac from Abraham's loins and Sarah's womb, which caused the holy child Jesus to be born of Mary, and afterwards brought him from the bowels of the earth in death to a glorious resurrection ;—the mighty proof, that nothing was impossible with God ; —the mighty pledge, that the great power which then wrought should be exerted for all the heirs of the covenant, and for the fulfilment of these promises, which were all made yea by this resurrection.—The unbelieving world have no such joy in their tribulation, nor in this hard chapter of it. All is gloom, gloom dark as the grave itself, to them under such dispensations. They have no such words with which to comfort themselves, nor any solid gladness with respect to their departed little ones.—When they most seek to please and flatter their minds about them, all is uncertainty. They leave them, they know not how, nor where, in the unseen world. No positive acts of their mind concerning hope of their future existence and blessedness ; no

particular desires about their being with Christ, who loved them, nor about his raising them also from their graves, afford comfort.—Were it only for my infants dead, I would wish to be a christian, and a real one, to be made glad, by positive acts of faith, with respect to their eternal well-being. These really wipe away tears from our eyes, before our Lord does it at last, and for ever from all our sorrows, and gives the joy about them, (to others unknown) that being born and redeemed, the great end of their being brought into life is answered, which can be said on no other principles than those of their redemption and immortality.

It is less difficult to go on, than to stop, on a subject so comfortable. But, as I must make an end of this letter, I cannot do it without offering my condoling compliments to both Mr. Hogs, Mrs. Campbell, and Mrs. Hog. They forget not, I hope, that the exhortation is as unto children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." They forget

not, I hope, that " weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning ;" and real christians live by the faith of a morning, that will dispel every sorrow as the shadows, and bring in an everlasting day of consolation. May that hope comfort you all in every thorny and weary step of your pilgrimage.

LETTER X.

From the reverend mr. Thomas Davidson, occasioned by the death of a friend's grandchild. Braintree, April, 1766.

THERE is something very remarkable in the course of providence in the death of children. Some wise and good reason there certainly is, though at present it may in a great measure be hid from us, why near two-thirds of mankind die in infancy, childhood and youth. If it be lawful for us to guess at it, may we not suppose that the God of mercy and love would suffer no more of the sinful, wretched race of mankind to live long in this world, than who are necessary to carry on

the purposes of his glory in it; and kindly removes such multitudes into the other world, before they have tasted much of the bitterness, vanity, misery, and disappointment, which attend and run through every period of the present life. I would not carry this thought farther than the word of God warrants me. But certainly they who have taken hold of the promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed," have ground to conclude, that their infant seed, removed by death, know this to their everlasting happiness. When our blessed lord and redeemer was born into our world, and condescended to become, as to his outward condition, a weak and helpless infant, infants were honoured to be the first sufferers on his account. He rebuked those who opposed little children being brought to him. He took them in his arms, blessed them, and said, "Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." These words make me conclude, that the greater part of the spirits of just men made perfect, consists of the souls of infants and children, who were just born into, and

died out of our world. You desire my thoughts of *Isa.* lxv. 20. "The child shall die an hundred years old." Whether the passage, v. 17—20. refers to a prosperous state of the church on earth, or to the heavenly glory, makes little difference, seeing the one may be considered as emblematical of the other. Peter seems to take them in the last sense, though not to the exclusion of the first, 2 *Pet.* iii. 13. The promise, v. 19. "The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying," must be taken with some limitation, if understood in the first sense. But if in the latter, they are strictly and absolutely true; weeping and the voice of crying for the death of children, being no more heard in that blessed place. There, they who died in infancy, shall appear in full maturity, according to their measure and proportion, as well as he who died in a good old age. Life in this world is never to be considered as separate from the glory of the great giver of life, but as connected with his wise and holy purposes in the scheme of providence and redemption. When one then hath filled up that part of life

allotted to him by the will of God, he may be said to have filled up his days. When infants and children die in the lord, he is as really glorified in them, as in those who die a hundred years old. Every age too has produced examples of persons who have died young, and have lived much in little time. Like some summer-fruits, they have ripened soon and speedily, and gone home. And who can find fault with this? For when all things are duly considered concerning this defiled, defiling and ensnaring world, the sooner persons are taken out of it to heaven the better. O! to be enabled to fill up every part of life with its proper business, so as to answer that ~~savory~~ character given of David, *Acts* xiii. 36. "He served his own generation by the will of God." Then we might long for falling asleep like him in Jesus. This is the only happy life, and the only happy death.

LETTER XI.

From Dugald Buchanan, schoolmaster and catechist in the Highlands to mr. A———d W———ce. Dated Kinloch, 5th February 1768.

I RECEIVED a letter from mr. Caw, acquainting me of the death of your daughter, and how wonderfully mrs. W———ce has been supported under this severe trial of her faith and patience. "This is the doing of the Lord," who commonly stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind. What an alleviating circumstance in your trial is it, that ye have no reason to mourn as those who have no hope? How many live to see their children and relations cut off in the prime of life, by diseases, the just effects of vice and intemperance! How many darts and thorns must pierce their hearts! What additional gall and wormwood is mixed in their cup, to which the parents of pious children are strangers? Patience under God's afflicting hand, and resignation to his will, are the chief means, whereby in the day of affliction, we

can glorify God. Imagine your dear departed child adopting the language of her redeemer: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I am gone to the father." How backward are our hearts to this duty of rejoicing! Our passions often get the better of our understandings, as well as of our faith. Our memories, treacherous enough on other occasions, here are ever faithful, and cruelly muster up, in a long succession, all the amiable qualities of our departed friends, and thus tear open our wounds, to bleed afresh. Imagination is set to work, and stuffs up their empty garments in their former shape, when we miss them at bed or table.—It is truly surprising, when our judgment is fully convinced, that God's paths are not only truth, but mercy, to such as fear him; and when our faith reads designs of love in our trials; that this has so little influence in silencing the murmurs of our souls. Yet, surely, it is pleasing to God, who knows our frame, and remembers we are dust, to look upon us, surrounded with all the frailties inseparable from human nature in its present state, lying low in the dust, and

weeping with a feeling smart of our pain and loss ; and at the same time acquiescing in his whole disposal of us and ours, as best for us, and, from the inmost recesses of our soul, striving to imitate Christ's prayer, " Not my will, but thine be done." It were well if, instead of pouring upon our wounds, and refusing to be comforted, our faith traced out our friends in the regions of immortality, where, to use Milton's phrase, they walk with God, " high in salvation, and the climes of bliss." Though the partition which now divides us from the eternal world is otherwise impenetrable, revelation informs us, that there the righteous are in a state of inconceivable happiness. As to what that happiness consists in, and their various employments, we are left much in the dark, as perhaps not fit to be revealed in this state. Yet surely it is pardonable, to cast some conjectures over this wall, that for a while divides us from our friends, as it is impossible to confine our active souls under the canopy of our moon and stars. Now, except where revelation gives here and there a hint of the heavenly state, analogy is our best

guide into these scenes, that eye hath not seen. I remember to have seen long ago a book of dr. Watts, called, "Death and Heaven," where he has happily indulged his fancy in assigning various employments for the blessed. He thinks, too, that there may be some solemn stated periods of worship in heaven, beyond what is their common service, either to commemorate some of the past transactions of the godhead, or to celebrate some new discovery of God.—And truly, considering the infinite nature of God, his glorious acts of creation and redemption, and the finite capacity of the highest orders of creatures, there must be new discoveries of God made to the blessed through all eternity, as they can only receive such discoveries in succession. Perhaps some such manifestation has been lately made, unknown till now in heaven itself by finite minds. A new song has been composed on this occasion, by Michael, Gabriel, Moses, David, or some other masterly hand, to celebrate this new discovery; and the concert was incomplete, till a messenger was dispatched for your dear child, to assist in singing the chorus, as

her sweet, soft, melodious voice was so well tuned before to the songs of Zion.——Our lord once entered Jerusalem with a grand retinue, and must have an ass to ride on, that he might fulfil an ancient prophesy. A messenger was dispatched for the ass, and, if the owners quarrelled for him, had orders to tell them, " that the lord had need of him." If your heart grudge or quarrel, that your child is so soon loosed from you, saying, Why was my dear child so suddenly snatched from me, in the bloom of youth, when I expected she should be the comfort of my old age, and sooth my pains and distresses ?—Why, the same answer stands on record for you, The lord hath need of her. He had need of more virgins in his train ; and your dear child was pitched upon. Therefore, rejoice in her honour and happiness.—Our lord has gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his people, and he sends his spirit to prepare his people for these mansions. And after they have served an apprenticeship to their future employment, that they may be fit to act agreeably to the great end of their calling, and fill

their thrones to the honour of that God who hath called them to glory, he then crowns them with endless happiness. Some have a longer time of probation than others. The great dresser of God's garden knows best when to transplant his fruit-bearing trees. In his perfect wisdom we ought always to acquiesce.—If I were to reason from analogy, I might ask mrs. W——ce, when she was with child of her departed daughter, if she desired to keep her in that close union with herself, any longer than her full time was come; that is, when the child was perfectly formed for this world, and fit to exercise its senses upon the various objects that this world approves? Nay, did she not wish for the happy minute of separation, though she knew the pangs and throes of child-bearing? And why should you, or mrs. W——ce, who rejoiced at her first birth, mourn at her being admitted into the number of the spirits of the just made perfect, when it is certain that many who rejoiced with you at her birth, hailed her arrival on the coasts of bliss.——Among those who rejoiced with you at her first birth,

and saluted her on the heavenly shore, we may safely mention mr. and mrs. H—g, and others of your pious relations and neighbours, who have got crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands, since her first birth.

But I see that this subject would lead me beyond the bounds of a letter. I have only to add, that from my very soul I sympathise with you and your whole family, in your loss, which is your daughter's gain and glory. That the Lord may bless your remaining children, preserve them to be the comfort of your age, form them to be vessels of honour meet for the master's use, and fill your own soul with those consolations which flow neither from wife, child, or friend, or any thing this world can give, or take away, is the sincere prayer of, sir, &c.

LETTER XII.

From the reverend mr. Thomas Gillespie, formerly minister of Carnock, at that time of Dunfermline, to mr. Thomas Hogg, 18th February, 1760.

WITH much concern I have heard, that, as the arbiter of life and death was formerly

pleased to take from you your first-born, so now your only son.

Your son had lived the time in this world appointed him from eternity, so invariably fixed, that it could neither be extended nor shortened. And it would not have been well, either for him or for you, that he had been continued with you a moment longer: for infinite wisdom decreed what was in every respect best.

He who gave freely, had a right to take away in sovereignty; and he did it at the season, and in the manner most for his glory and your good, *Job* i. 21. When the children are dead the Lord lives, and is better than all sons and daughters, and every relation and enjoyment. He removes children, and other comforts, to make room for himself in the heart. What is lost in the creature, is more than made up in the enjoyment of a God in Christ. The connexions we have with those of our kind, with those who are a part of ourselves, are but the streams, yea, broken cisterns; God, the living fountain of felicity, that ever flows and overflows. The counsel of heaven

cannot be reversed, and ought to be acquiesced in. That consideration, 2 *Sam.* xii. 23. 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,' ought to calm and quiet. The children, first one, then another, are, in the disposal of providence, gone only a little before. The parents ere long are to follow. If there is the scriptural hope, that a part of one's self is gone to heaven, that is one subordinate attraction to raise the heart above all the enjoyments of time, and above life itself, to our father's house, in which are many mansions, and where little children, who died in Christ, shall be found a hundred years old. Children are not only blessings and comforts, but charges and trusts. Perhaps the maxim may be justly applied to them, "honour is a burden." Removing them, is freeing from a mighty load of care, in which parents, different ways, and from various causes, are in hazard of failing, and falling short. Christ's words, that the kingdom of heaven is of little children, seem to intimate, not only that such are admitted into the paradise above, but that its glorified inhabitants of the human race, will principally

be composed of little children. Parents, therefore, who have made a solemn surrender to the Lord of their seed, who died young, and who have wrestled with the angel of the covenant for their salvation, may humbly hope, that they are gone, to be with Christ. There are so many disappointments in children, when grown up, and such crosses from them, that, especially in this age, the parents may be counted happy, whose children are fenced by the grave against the infection of the world, lying in wickedness. How ravishing! if to that is joined the hope, that their souls are gone to join angels, just men made perfect, and spirits of such, in singing praises to him who sits on the throne, and to the lamb!

Another worthy Minister, in a letter on the same occasion, says, among other things:

If we have faith to look into the unseen world, and behold a child taken into the society of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, how much more hath God done for him, and for you all, than if he had left him to your care and provision in this wretched world?

LETTER XIII.

From the reverend mr. Davidson of Braintree, to mrs. G———t, 28th July, 1768.

I WAS exceeding sorry to find what distress your family has been in, and particularly the breach made on it by the death of the child mentioned in yours. May the Lord sanctify it abundantly to the immediate parents, and to you. I travelled that gloomy road myself three times: and by remembering what I then felt, I can more feelingly enter into the trial, and bear a part with you in it. I remember an expression mr. Maclaren had in prayer, when your brother Ebenezer was dying, which I believe I shall never forget. "It is not easy for parents to part with children. Some of us ken that they are little pieces of ourselves bound up in another skin, and thou even transplantest these little tender vines out of the cold, barren, unnatural soil of this world, to the banks of the river of life, where they will never wither more."

Of all the evils that brought sin into the world, I think a short life in it was among the

least of them: to the children of God, and their seed, it certainly is so; and if it was possible for our prayers to bring them back again to us, they would give us little thanks for our pains. But it is an unspeakable mercy both to them and to us, that that cannot be done. Submission, absolute submission to the will of God, is not only our duty, but our greatest wisdom and interest. It is easy, I know, to say many fine things concerning this, and to give our assent to them too, when our cup stands even, and is filled with good things. But, oh the difference there is between theory and practice, when we come to be tried, especially in some tender point, in which, of all others, we can the least bear to be touched! When the Lord blasts and withers some pleasant gourd, in which we expected satisfaction; when he makes a spoil of our desirable things, even of that which is peculiarly goodly in our eyes; O, what rebellion rises in the mind! And how difficult do we find it to say, with unfeigned submission, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" Nothing less than the almighty

power of the spirit and grace of Christ, can bring us to it, and keep us at it. In ourselves, we are poor, weak, inconsistent creatures, made up of contradiction; but in our dear Lord we are complete: and what a mercy is it to us, that "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are but dust. Our days are as grass, over which the wind passeth, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

LETTER XIV.

From mr. James G———t, merchant, Edinburgh, to the reverend mr. Thomas Davidson, Braintree, 21st August 1756, occasioned by mrs. Davidson's death.

MY DEAR SUFFERING FRIEND,

I HAVE not seen your letter to mr. Wallace, but I have heard its melancholy contents. I heartily sympathize with you, and I feel

your distress. To part with such a comfortable wife, the companion many years of your travel and tribulation, how hard is it! What a struggle must have been betwixt nature and grace, betwixt affection to the creature, and submission to the creature's God! And now that she is gone, what must you still feel! When you lie down, and when you rise up; when you go out, and come in; and when you sit down to every meal, still, still her place is empty. I think I can enter into your spirit, and take part in your heaviness and grief. But of what avail is the sympathy of friends, in comparison with his, who took our infirmities and bore our sickness? Wondrous grace! In all our afflictions, he is afflicted: and every member that suffers, our compassionate head suffers with it! What a relief is this to me, when thinking on christian sufferers! I can do no more than pity and weep with them. But he, who is touched with a feeling of their infirmities, can effectually touch their hearts with a feeling of his consolations. Though he cause grief, yet has he compassion according to the multitude

of his mercies ; and when he takes away father or mother, wife or children, he will give of himself a hundred fold more, even in this life ; whereby the poor soul is made to forget its poverty, and to remember its misery no more. O ! may our glorious high priest make you to feel his tenderness in this holy quieting way : and let him come and sup with you, telling you, that you are not alone, for he is with you, he will never leave you, nor forsake you. For my part, I cease not to pray, " Jehovah, hear him in the day of trouble, and let the name of the God of Jacob defend him. Let him send help from his sanctuary, and strengthen him out of Zion." How necessary is the smallest trial ; but how much more, when the trial is so great ? And the more necessary, the more certainly will it be bestowed : For he is that brother who was born for adversity ; who, " because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, himself also took part of the same, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." O ! that our trust and affection towards him, bore some proportion to his affection and

faithfulness towards us! what should we not do? what should we not suffer at his will?

Upon the real or apprehended loss of friends, I feel in myself, what I suppose is too common. I feel my distress greatly aggravated by the foolish thought, that I am to live long behind them. Many years must I pass, many summers and winters, without these dear companions of my feeble steps. But, did I turn the thought the other way, saying, they are gone before, and perhaps in a few months, or a few days, I shall follow them; how might this moderate my grief, and put me on the stretch to join them, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, who surround the throne of God, and of the lamb, who go no more out, but, without wearying, serve him day and night in his temple. The time, I hope, shall come, when we shall meet, never to part.—Let me intreat you to take care of your health in your present circumstances. Do not stay close at home, but ride about to your acquaintance, or go some weeks to London, which I assure you is very proper.

LETTER XV.

From the same to the same, 2d October, 1756.

YOURS, my dear friend, I received a few posts ago, which brought me again to the house of mourning. There I find it much better for me to be, than in the house of mirth; and that, I am persuaded, is the most proper station for us all. It is now our time to be sorrowful; but our sorrow shall be turned into joy. Nay, in the midst of our present griefs, we are not overwhelmed with sorrow. You also join the numerous cloud of witnesses, while you sorrow not as they who have no hope; while you follow your dead within the vail, whither the blessed forerunner has for us entered; while you look beyond your own remaining years or days to the celestial point, that ends our mortal story, that begins our immortal, amidst the thousands of thousands, who hunger no more, neither thirst any; for the lamb that is in the midst of the throne doth lead them, and feed them by the living fountains of water, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes. O! for the lively

faith of these words. May he, who gives liberally, and upbraids not, bestow it. He knows our weakness without it, and he knows our thorny way, that we must deny ourselves, must take up our cross, and follow him. Who is sufficient for these things? Blessed be his name, our sufficiency is of God. His word, his faithful word, stands full on our side. Whatever discouragements from without, or from within, are against us, that word cannot fail. What then am I, who so often call it in question, and say, Doth his promise fail for evermore, hath he forgotten to be gracious?—Indeed, when he is pleased in any measure to draw aside the vail, I can glory in my weakness, that his power may rest upon me. But when he hides his face, I am troubled. In the day of adversity, I expect support; but, when I am disappointed, as I think, then my heart fails. Yet, I sometimes say, this is mine infirmity, there is a need-be of heaviness for a season, through manifold temptations: and I am ashamed of my complaints, when I think of the captain of our salvation, crying out, as in the 22d *Psalm*:

"Who knows the source of these strong cries and tears, from what clouds and depth of hiding they proceeded ?" Such grief he surely was acquainted with : and should any of his followers think it strange, that they are led in the road of sorrow ? Should they not rather think it strange, wondrous strange, that a perpetual, or everlasting darkness, does not cover them ? What shall we say of him, what shall we say to him, who was oppressed for our sake in the days of his flesh, who took on him all the waves, all the billows of almighty wrath, that we might be delivered from them, and who now shines forth our everlasting light, our God, our glory.

Let us then look unto the author and finisher of our faith. Let us believe that his eye is on us, pondering all our paths, caring for us, even to the numbering of the hairs of our head, and thinking towards us, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give us an expected end. All things are delivered unto him of the father. Will we not acquiesce ? Will we not say, amen and amen ? Yes, we will,

through his grace. You will join with yours in all affection, &c.

LETTER XVI.

From the same to the same, 15th March, 1757.

MY dear little grandchild was seized with a cold the end of last month; and after complaining of a sore throat for some days, was suddenly cut off by a fatal disease they call the croop, on the first day of this month, when he was just about four years old. I never imagined, that he had the room in our hearts, particularly in my own, that I find he had. I cannot tell you my grief. It was indeed like cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. He was, you know, a healthful promising boy, and was beginning to enter into our conversation, and to take part in our little family-schemes and projects; and you can easily conceive, what a shock it gave us to part with him, upon only a few hours warning.

Yet, I durst not contend with him, whose

property he was, neither durst I hold, when he was pleased to take away ; but I gave him up into his hands, who may do with his own as he pleases ; into his hands, who blessed little children, and who rebuked his disciples when they forbade them to come unto him. O ! thought I, how happy is my dear lamb. He who spoke as a child, who had not reason enough at that age to understand how he was lost in the first Adam, or how he was restored in our glorious second Adam, now he knows both, far better than ever I did. Now he is an hundred years old. Now he is joining the redeemed company in everlasting hallelujahs to him that sits on the throne, and to the ever-worthy and adorable lamb.

Innumerable things in the house and in the neighbourhood bring him to my remembrance, and bring tears to my eyes. Yet I dare not retract, nor wish he had been spared, in contradiction to his will, who alone judgeth righteously. I complain of nothing but myself, that I cannot as I would take hold of the creator instead of the creature ; that I should

feel a heart sore and broken, when I am so near the great physician, who has power and good-will to heal; that I feel a heart disappointed and empty, and yet cannot bring in the eternal all to fill up the void that himself has made. These are the desires of my heart, and of my dear Anne's. O pray that they may be granted us; for you know, that the deferring of the desire maketh the heart sick. But, I should rather say, he knows it, and he hath said it, who is not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted as we are, that he might pity and succour them that are tempted. To him therefore will we look, and in his name will we trust. We will sing of mercy in judgment. Many more aggravations might have been in our distress, and less, much less apparent mercy.

LETTER XVII.

From the same to the same, 3d May 1774.

I SHOULD have answered your kind letter of 19th October before now; but I have

been, and still am under such heaviness and sorrow, that I have spirit to do nothing. Whether it be from the deceitful enemy without, from the wicked heart within, or from my overwhelming disease, I know not. I believe all are combined to make my life bitter; yet I know they are all under the control of our blessed almighty Lord. He is pleased, I see it when I walk through the field of his word, he is pleased to deal so with many of his dear children. This, through his grace, keeps me from complaining, and often also encourages my hope: I say, if some are to be cast into prison, why not I? If some are afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, why not I? If some are fearing continually every day, why not I? ——All are taken notice of by our faithful Lord, and spoken kindly to in a fitness to their circumstances; and all that is spoken shall be fulfilled. But our times are in the hands of God, and it is fit that his people should wait his time; yet how difficult, nay impossible, without his gracious help, to wait a few days, much more years! But he has

been my helper hitherto, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. He knows, that I have had no other gods before him; that I had no hope and no help in means. From the beginning, all my hope and my help has been mercifully given me in his holy word, and I would fain hope, that he will maintain what he hath wrought for me.

LETTER XVIII.

From the same to the same, 2d August 1777.

AT our time of life, distress and griefs belong to us. It is the portion of his followers, who himself especially suffered in the end of his days; and most fit it is, that his poor people for ordinary should have their sorest trials in the end of their days. Abraham had many trials of faith and workings of unbelief, when the promise was in dependence; but the trial to offer up his son, was no doubt the sorest of all. What a course of trials were on Jacob most of his days? but the last was sorest, when he said, all these things are against me.

Joseph also was long tried ; but the heaviest, I suppose, was after the advancement of the butler. He no doubt expected to be spoken of to Pharaoh ; yet two full years elapsed before he was delivered. David also had dangers and perplexities many years ; but the sorest was, when he and his people were robbed of all, and the people spake of stoning him. These things, my dear friend, are written for our learning : and indeed I was made to entertain this thought with respect to myself : if others have been so dealt with, why not sinful I ? At the same time, (it is about three years ago), I was made to attend to that word, " The Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth their strength gone, and that there is none shut up or left :" therefore, if brought so low, that my strength should be gone, I would lay hold on the unchangeable promise, and with the more confidence trust in God, for such was the very time he had fixed for helping. This, you know, I could not in my own strength, though I had been in ordinary health and

spirits ; far less under so many years of grievous oppression in body and spirits. Yet our gracious Lord, who all these years has kept my soul in life by means of his blessed word, is still pleased to speak to me by the same word, though in his infinite wisdom he restrains the sweet influences of his spirit, which formerly he bestowed upon his poor worm. Yet I would fain hope, that as he promised me in the beginning of my trial, he will spare in mercy the poor man and the indigent ; he will preserve alive my needy soul ; will redeem me both from deceit and violence ; and in the end will say, it is my people, and I shall say, with wonder and praise, the Lord is my God.

In my last, I said that the sermons to old men were useful to me, particularly that upon the case of Job*. The trials of that holy man were extraordinary ; and though I am ready to say, that I am overwhelmed with sore affliction, yet my trials are not once to be mentioned in comparison with his. He is set

* I suppose he refers to Orton's discourses to the aged, of which the 5th is on Job. vii. 3.

forth as an example of suffering affliction and patience ; and also as a lasting evidence, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. O Lord, may I be thus highly honoured, and not left to be a reproach to thy name, nor to cause thy good ways to be evil spoken of. Hitherto God hath mercifully kept me decent before the world ; and having brought me so far through the fire, I would fain hope that he will not now forsake me. I am ashamed to have said so much of myself ; but I believe you will bear with me, as you know the heart of a stranger.

LETTER XIX.

From the reverend mr. Riccalton, to dr. R. Walker, Hobkirk, 16th August, 1763, occasioned by the death of a child.

CONSTRUCTING of providences is a business much too high for such low beings as we are. Ours is to improve them, in the light in which the wise disposer of all has condescended to put them. The psalmist himself was quite at a loss, while he surveyed them in

the light of human wisdom, and in no small danger of misconstruction, till he went to the sanctuary. He was a wise man, and directed by better wisdom than his own, who said, that no man can know love or hatred by all that is before him. The right christian lives by faith, not by sense; and judges not by what he feels, but by what God hath said; and when he has said, that "to them that love him, all things shall work together for good," it might have been abundantly sufficient though he had never said more. His bare word is better, and infinitely more comfortable security than all the world can give, either in possession or prospect. But when he has condescended to take upon himself the relation and the part of a father, with all the tender care for the children that we know attends it, we must be bad children, if we do not find ourselves much safer under the direction of perfect goodness, seconded by infinite wisdom and power, than being indulged in our own blind, hasty, perverse inclinations. A wise father will rather choose to have his most beloved child cry bitterly, than indulge him in

any playthings that may hurt him ; and our gracious redeemer, among all the kind things he hath done for us, never consulted our interests more, than by putting this petition in our mouths, " Thy will be done ;" and he practised what he directed, in a case infinitely harder than any child of God can ever feel, "Not my will, but thine be done." We readily acknowledge, that all our concerns are much safer in his hand than our own ; why then should we feel uneasiness, that any thing should fall out with us otherwise than we would perhaps, nay, we may say certainly we would, very foolishly have chosen for ourselves ? Nothing can mar the christian peace and comfort, unless some unhappy mixture of ignorance or unbelief, which always go together ; something on which we lay more stress than on the faithfulness of God, who has undertaken kindly to care for all those who dare trust in him.——This world is not our home ; and whether we think of it or not, we are only sojourners, or rather travellers, passing through it to the place of our everlasting abode. The worst thing that can befal, is, to

be entangled in it, so as to forget we are upon a journey; and to have our hearts so engaged to any thing we meet with here, as to make us loth to part with it: and the best thing that can be done for us, is to keep us from such temptations. Nothing will do that effectually, but a full conviction of the vanity and emptiness of all the pleasures and enjoyments of a present life; looking and longing for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our saviour, and that happy day, when, by the destruction of these vile bodies, all our connexions with this present world shall be finally broken, and all our hopes and fears from thence, which occasion all our present sorrows; when suffering shall be no more; and when it will be our wonder, how we ever could have been so foolish as to be moved with such shadows of vanity.

LETTER XX.

Speech of the rev. mr. Samuel Danforth of Roxbury, New England, on occasion of the death of three of his children, the eldest of whom was remarkably pious and intelligent. From dr. Cotton Mather's History of New England, Book iv. *p.* 156.

MY FRIENDS,

IF any that see my grief should say unto me, as the Danites unto Micah, What aileth thee? I thank God, I cannot answer, as he did, They have taken away my gods. My heart was indeed somewhat set upon my children, especially the eldest: but they were none of my gods, none of my portion: my portion is whole and untouched unto this day. To understand myself, and to communicate unto my hearers the spiritual meaning and compass of the law and rule, and the nature of gospel obedience, hath been my design and work, upon which I have employed much reading and study; and what faith, hope, love, patience, &c. the glorious wisdom, power, and mercy of God, do oblige us to render, I have endeavoured to set forth before you.

What if God will now try whether they were mere notions and speculations that I spoke, or whether I believed as I spoke, and whether there be any divine spark in my heart? I remember him that said to Abraham, "Hereby I know that thou fearest me, in that thou hast not withheld from me thy son, thine only son." It is the pleasure of God, that (besides all that may be gained by reading, and studying, and preaching) I should learn and teach obedience by the things that I suffer: the holy fire is not to be fetched for you, out of such a flint as I am, without smiting. Not long before these strokes light upon us, it pleased God marvellously to quicken our hearts, (both mine and my wife's), and to stir up in us most earnest desires after himself: and, now he hath taken our children, will he accept us unto freer and fuller communion with himself, blessed be his holy name. I trust the Lord hath done, what he hath done, in wisdom, and faithfulness, and dear love; and that in taking these pleasant things from me, he exercises and expresses as tender affection unto me, as I now express towards them, in

mourning for the loss of them. I desire, with Ephraim, to bemoan myself, &c. Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. O that I might hear the Lord answering me, as he did, ver. 20. It is meet to be said to God, "We have borne chastisement, we will not offend; what we see not, teach thou us; and if we have done iniquity, we will do so no more." We know, and God much more knows enough in us, and by us, to justify his repeated strokes, though we cannot tax ourselves with any known way of disobedience. My desire is, that none may be over much dismayed at what hath befallen us; and let no man, by any means, be offended. Who may say to the Lord, "What doest thou?" I can say from my heart, though what is come upon us is very dreadful and amazing, yet I consent unto the will of God, that it is good. Doth not the goldsmith cast his metal into the furnace? and you, husbandmen, do you not cause the flail to pass over your grain, not that you hate your wheat, but that you desire pure bread? Had our children replied when we corrected them, we could not have borne it: but, poor hearts,

they did us reverence: how much rather should we be subject to the father of spirits, and live! You know, that nine years since, I was in a desolate condition, without father, without mother, without wife, without children: but, what a father, and mother, and wife, have been bestowed upon me, and are still continued, though my children are removed! And above all, though I cannot deny, but that it pierceth my very heart, to call to remembrance the voice of my dear children, calling, father, father! a voice now not heard; yet I bless God, it doth far more soundly refresh and rejoice me, to hear the Lord continually calling unto me, "My son, my son! my son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art corrected of him." And blessed be God, that doth not despise the affliction of the afflicted, nor hides his face from him. It was the consideration that God had sanctified and glorified himself, by striking an holy awe and dread of his majesty into the hearts of his people, that made Aaron hold his peace: and if the Lord will glorify himself by my family, by these awful strokes upon

me, quickening parents unto their duty, and awakening their children to seek after the Lord, I shall desire to be content, though my name be cut off. And I beseech you, be earnest with the Lord for us, that he would keep us from sinning against him, and that he would teach us to sanctify his name: and though our dear branches have forsaken us, yet that he, who hath promised to be with his children in six troubles, and in seven, would not forsake us. My heart truly would be consumed, and would even die within me, but that the good will of him who dwelt in the burning bush, and his good word of promise, are my trust and stay."

LETTER XXI.

Dr. Doddridge's Letter to a Lady, on the death of her brother, 1724. *From dr. Orton's Life of dr. Doddridge, p.* 184.

MY heart is so full of the thought of your dear brother's death, that I know not how to command my pen to any other subject. Believe me, madam, I see that heavy affliction in

many of its most aggravated circumstances. But need I mention them to you, who have, no doubt, a much tenderer sense of them? Or need I mention those common consolations, which christianity affords us under all our calamities, or those, which the circumstances of the case before us do most peculiarly admit? I know you have already given them their weight, and are well furnished with consolations upon this head; having been obliged, by such afflictions, frequently to have recourse to them.——No doubt, you have often been thinking, that, as we are christians, we are not to be so much concerned about the different kinds of providential dispensations, which we are now exercised with, whether of a prosperous or a calamitous nature, as about the correspondency of our behaviour to them. The law of christianity, not to say of nature itself, requires that we should not only be silent and composed, but cheerful and thankful under our afflictions. This indeed is what the generality of christians are wanting in; but that is no proof, that it is an irrational or

impossible demand, but rather a sublime attainment in religion. It is evident that nothing can be more grateful to God, and edifying to the world, than to see, that a christian, under the heavy pressure of calamity, can not only restrain the excess of sorrow, and suppress those indecent complaints, which the corruption of nature would be too ready to suggest, but can mingle praises with his tears, and love and rejoice in his heavenly father, even when he feels the smart of his correcting rod. Let me suggest a few hints upon this head, which you will easily enlarge upon in your own thoughts to greater advantage.——God hath seen fit to take away your brother: and is not this a proper season to be thankful, that you so long enjoyed him? No doubt, you have been thinking of his character in the most advantageous particulars of it; and perhaps have considered it as a great aggravation of your affliction, that you have lost so excellent a brother. But may you not now press in each of these afflicting thoughts to subserve the purposes of thankfulness and joy? Do

not you reflect, that the more excellent he was, the more surprising was the goodness of God in bestowing him upon you, and continuing him so long to you? When you say, it may be with tears in your eyes, "How few are there in the world that could have sustained such a loss!" What is it but to say in other words, how few are there in the world, on whom God ever bestowed so valuable a friend, as he gave to me? Let common sense judge, whether that be matter of complaint or praise.——You should be thankful to God, that for so many years you had a constant share in his prayers. The more religious he was, the more frequently and earnestly he prayed, and the more favourably did God regard him. No doubt but his prayers are still in remembrance before God; and as he most frequently asked those blessings for you, which are of the most excellent and permanent nature, much of the good effect of these addresses may be still behind. You know not how many refreshing visits of his grace, how many favourable interpositions of his providence, how high a degree of holiness

in this world, and of usefulness in the next, God may now be preparing to bestow upon you, in answer to the prayers of this excellent man.——Once more, let the providence of God, in removing your brother, be improved to a more thankful sense of his goodness in continuing your surviving brother, whose lot is cast so much nearer to you. If you take the matter in this view, it brings your passions to a balance; for you can never imagine, that we are to lament any degree of affliction in a greater proportion than we rejoice in an equal degree of comfort.——You see, madam, you have cause of thankfulness, though your brother be dead; and that many of the considerations, with which you feed your sorrows, are capable of being made subservient to the nobler exercises of gratitude and love. But what if I should advance still further, and say, that the death of your brother should not only allow you to be thankful for your other mercies, but itself should be made the matter of praise? I think I should say no more than the apostle hath said, when he exhorts us, "in every thing to give

thanks :" Nay, I should say no more, than, I am confident, your deliberate reason must subscribe to.——Are you not the servant of God, and have you not yielded yourself to him ? Was it not the business of the last sacrament-day ? And are you not renewing the dedication every day of your life ? When you consecrate yourself to God, you give up every separate interest of your own ; and resolve all into this one great petition, that " his name may be glorified," particularly in all you are, and all you have. Now, do you imagine, that God would have removed so eminent a saint, so useful a minister, and afflicted a numerous and religious family, as well as a multitude of sympathising friends, if he had not known that it was for his glory ? When you have been saying, as you have daily said, " Father, thy will be done ;" were you not then praying for the loss of your dearest comforts, even for the death of your brother, and of every other friend you have, upon supposition that it were the will of God ? You certainly were ; unless you meant to say, Let thy will be done, so far as it is agreeable to my

own. Now, I leave you to judge, whether the answer of prayer be the matter of complaint or of praise.——I know it is very difficult to apprehend how such a dispensation as this should be for "the glory of God." But have we known so little of the nature of the great God, as to question the wisdom of his providential dispensations, merely because they appear unaccountable to us? We use ourselves to a contracted way of thinking and reasoning upon this head; much like a small congregation in the country, that fancy the interest of religion is very much damaged by the removal of a useful minister from them, though it be to a sphere of much more extensive service. Because this earth is our habitation, we fondly imagine it to be a place of very great importance; whereas if we consider the number and excellency of the inhabitants of heaven, we must be forced to confess, that it is very probable, those revolutions may be very serviceable to the whole creation, which are detrimental to some particular part, in its highest and most important interest. And of this nature, I take the removal of ex-

cellent ministers to be, especially in the prime of their strength and usefulness——I may add, that there are certain views both with relation to him and yourself, which will farther evince your obligations to thankfulness. With regard to your brother, you easily apprehend a foundation for thankfulness, though perhaps you have not considered his present happiness in that particular view. You believe, with the greatest reason, that death was inconceivably advantageous to him, and that, now he is "absent from the body, he is present with the Lord." Now, with all your tender friendship, can you question, whether it be your part to rejoice with him in that glory and felicity which he now enjoys? Or, can you imagine, that you are to be so much concerned that he is not with you, as to forget to rejoice that he is with God? Was it more for you to lose a brother, than for the apostles to part with Christ himself? And yet he says the very same thing which shocked you so much a few lines above; "if ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I go to the father." When your brother was alive,

you did not only take pleasure in him, when he was in the same house and room with yourself, but at the distance of above a hundred miles. You rejoiced to think that he was well; that he was surrounded with agreeable friends, furnished with plentiful accommodations; and, above all, laying himself out with vigour and success in the service of our great common master. And will you entertain so mean an idea of the preparation which the God of heaven and earth has made for the supreme happiness of his beloved children, as to question, whether he be now raised to more valuable friends, more delightful entertainment, and a sphere of more extensive service? I am confident, madam, you would have been thankful from your heart for your brother's recovery: And would it have been a greater mercy to him, to have been raised from a languishing illness, to a state of confirmed health, amidst the vanity and misery of this state of mortality, than to be exalted to immortal health and vigour, amidst the entertainment of angels, and the enjoyment of God? Or, has so generous-spirited a person

as yourself begun now to imagine, that you are to be thankful on the account of none but yourself? So far from that, you think it a great matter of thankfulness, and no doubt, you are frequently praising God for it, that you have an excellent brother left, so agreeably settled, so universally respected, and so zealously and successfully engaged in the most honourable service. But is it not more, that you have another brother among the blessed angels in heaven? How different are the services, which the one is paying to the throne of grace, and the other to the throne of glory! When they are both engaged, it may be at the very same moment, in the contemplation of God and divine things, how vastly do you think the younger brother has now the advantage of the elder? May there not be the same difference in accuracy, solidity, and manly pleasure, between the thoughts of the blessed saint in heaven and the philosopher upon earth, as between the sublimest thoughts of that philosopher, and the roving imagination of a little infant, in which reason is but just beginning to dawn?

Certainly it should be a constant source of delight to us, amidst all the disturbances and calamities of life, that we have so many friends in heaven, whose joy and glory should be to us as our own.——You must now give me leave to add, that you have reason to be thankful for this dispensation of providence, not only from a principle of zeal for God and friendship to your brother; but from a regard to your own personal interest. The gospel teacheth its sincere professors to regard every providence as a mercy, when it tells them, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God:" and therefore, though you could not see mercy in this particular stroke, religion would nevertheless require you to believe and acknowledge it. But cannot you yourself perceive some mercy in it? Has it not, as you are pleased to intimate in your letter, an apparent tendency to wean your affections from this world, and to raise them to the heavenly felicity? Do you not find the thoughts of death more tolerable, more delightful to you, since God has removed so powerful an attractive from earth, and

translated it to heaven? Nay, do you not find it a considerable exercise of patience to be absent, it may be for several years, from this dear, happy brother, whose image continually presents itself to your mind in so much the more charming a light, as your heart is melted with grief for his death? Now, if an indifference to this world, and a most affectionate desire of a happy immortality, be an important branch of the christian temper; if the scriptures are so frequently inculcating it upon us, and we so continually praying for the increase, and lamenting the deficiency of it, how reasonable is it, that we should be thankful for those providences, which of all others have the greatest tendency to promote it?——I write these things, madam, not with the coldness of a stranger, but with the tender sympathy of a friend; and with so much the greater sympathy, as, since I began this letter, I have lost a very agreeable and valuable person out of my congregation, with some circumstances, which render the stroke peculiarly surprising and afflicting. May God teach us so to bear and improve all our afflictions,

both in ourselves and our friends, that we may have reason to reflect upon them, as the most valuable mercies of our lives; and that they may fit us for that happy world, where we shall be above the need, and then, undoubtedly, above the reach of them!

LETTER XXII.

From the rev. Philip Henry, to a couple related to him, who in a very short time had buried all their children of the small-pox, in the year 1679.

DEAR COUSINS,

THIS is to you both, whom God hath made one in the conjugal relation, and who are one also in the present affliction; only to signify to you, that we do heartily sympathise with you in it. The trial is indeed sharp, and there will be need of all the wisdom and grace you have, and of all the help of friends you can get, both to bear and to improve it aright. You must bear it with "silence and submission. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, "I have born chastisement." He is sovereign Lord of all, and may do with us and ours, as

pleaseth him. It is not for the clay to quarrel with the potter. It was mercy you had children, and comfort in them so long; it is mercy that yet you have one another, and your children are not lost, but gone before, a little before, whither you yourselves are hasting after. And if a storm be coming, as, God grant it be not, it is best with them that put first into the harbour. Your children are taken away from the evil to come, and you must not mourn as they that have no hope. Sensible you cannot but be; but dejected and sullen you must not be; that will but put more bitterness in the cup, and make way for another, perhaps a sharper stroke. You must not think, and I hope you do not, that there cannot be a sharper stroke, for God hath many arrows in his quiver; he can heat the furnace seven times hotter, and again and again seven times hotter, till he hath consumed us; and if he should do so, yet still we must say, he hath punished us less than our iniquities have deserved. For examples of patience in the like kind we have two eminent ones in the book of God, those are Job and

Aaron; of the latter it is said, Lev. x. 13, "He held his peace;" and that which quieted him, was what his brother Moses said to him, "This is that which the Lord hath said, I will be sanctified;" and if God be sanctified, Aaron is satisfied; if God have glory from it, Aaron hath nothing to say against it. Of the former it is said, Job i. 20, "he fell down," but it was to worship; and we are told how he expressed himself, "The Lord gave," &c. He acknowledgeth God in all: and indeed, after all, this is it, my dear cousins, that you must satisfy yourselves with under this sad providence, that the Lord hath done it, and the same will that ordered the thing itself, ordered all the circumstances of it; and who are we that we should dispute with our Maker? "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; but let not the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" and as for the improvement of this affliction, which I hope both of you earnestly desire, for it is a great loss to lose such a providence, and not be made better by it, I conceive there are four lessons

which it should teach you, and they are good lessons, and should be well learned, for the advantage of them is unspeakable. 1. It should for ever imbitter sin to you ; you know what she said to the prophet, 1 Kings xvii. 18, " Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son ?" 'tis sin, sin that is the old kill-friend, the Jonah that hath raised this storm, the Achan that hath troubled your house ; then how should you grow in your hatred of it, and endeavours against it ? that you may be the death of that which hath been the death of your dear children ; I say the death of it for nothing less will satisfy the true penitent, than the death of such a malefactor. 2. It should be a spur to you to put you on in heaven's way : it may be you were growing remiss in duty, beginning to slack your former pace in religion, and your heavenly father saw it, and was grieved at it, and sent this sad providence to be your monitor, to tell you, you should remember whence you were fallen, and do your first works, and be more humble and holy, and heavenly and self-denying, and watchful, abounding always in

the work of the Lord. O blessed are they that come out of such a furnace thus refined, they will say hereafter, 'twas a happy day for them that ever they were put in. 3. You must learn by it as long as you live, to keep your affections in due bounds towards creature-comforts, How hard is it to love and not to over-love, to delight in children or yoke-fellows, and not over-delight : now God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to any other ; and our excess this way doth often provoke him to remove that mercy from us, which we do thus make an idol of ; and our duty is to labour when he doth so, to get that matter amended, and to rejoice in all our enjoyments with trembling, and as if we rejoiced not. 4. It should be a means of drawing your hearts and thoughts more upwards and homewards ; I mean your everlasting home. You should be looking oftener now than before into the other world. I shall go to him, saith David, when his little son was gone before. It is yet but a little while ere all the things of time shall be swallowed up in eternity ; and the matter is not great, whether we or ours

die first, whilst we are all dying: in the midst of life we are in death: what manner of persons then ought we to be? Now our lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our father, be your support under, and do you good by this dispensation, and give you a name better than that of sons and daughters. We are daily mindful of you at the throne of grace, in our poor measure, and dearly recommended to you, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

Copy of a letter from dr. Isaac Watts to madam Sewall, upon the death of her children, 7 November, 1728.

MADAM,

YESTERDAY, from mr. Sewall's hand, I received the favour of several letters from my friends in New England, and a particular account of that sharp and surprising stroke of providence, that has made a painful and lasting wound in your soul. He desired a letter from my hand, directed to you, which might carry in it some balm for an afflicted spirit. By his information I find, I am not an utter

stranger to your family and kindred. Mr. Lee, your venerable grandfather, was predecessor to mr. Thomas Rowe, my honoured tutor, and once my pastor in my younger years. Mr. Peacock, who married your eldest aunt, was my intimate friend. Mrs. Bishop and mrs. Wirley were both my acquaintance, though my long illness, and my absence from London, has made me a stranger to their posterity, whom I knew when children. But now I know not who of them are living or where. Dr. Cotton Mather, your late father-in-law, was my yearly correspondent, and I lament the loss of him. But the loss you have sustained is of a tenderer and more distressing kind. Yet let us see, whether there are not sufficient springs of consolation, flowing all around you, to allay the smart of so sharp a sorrow. And may the Lord open your eyes, as he did the eyes of Hagar in the wilderness, to espy the spring of water, when she was dying with thirst, and her child over against her ready to expire. Gen. xxi. 19.

Have you lost two lovely children? Did you make them your idols? If you did,

God has saved you from idolatry. If you did not, you have your God still, and a creature cannot be miserable, who has a God. The little words "My God" have infinitely more sweetness than "my sons" or "my daughters." Were they very desirable blessings? Your God calls you to the nobler sacrifice. Can you give up these to him at his call? So was Isaac, when Abraham was required to part with him at God's altar. Are you not a daughter of Abraham? Then imitate his faith, his self denial, his obedience, and make your evidences of such a spiritual relation to him shine brighter on this solemn occasion. Has God taken them from your arms? And had you not given them to God before? Had you not devoted them to him in baptism? Are you displeased that God calls for his own? Was not your heart sincere in the resignation of them to him? Show then, madam, the sincerity of your heart in leaving them in the hand of God. Do you say, they are lost? Not out of God's sight, and God's world, though they are gone out of our sight and our world. "All live to God." You may

hope the spreading covenant of grace has sheltered them from the second death. They live, though not with you.

Are you ready to complain, you have brought forth for the grave? It may be so, but not in vain. Is. lxv. 25. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; (i. e. for sorrow without hope) for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." This has been a sweet text to many a mother, when their children are called away betimes. And the prophet Jeremy, ch. xxxi. 15, 17, has very comfortable words to allay the same sorrows. Did you please yourself in what comforts you might have derived from them in maturer years? But, madam, do you consider sufficiently, that God has taken them away from the evil to come, and hid them in the grave from the prevailing and mischievous temptations of a degenerate age? My brother's wife in London has buried seven or eight children, and among them all her sons. This thought has reconciled her to the providence of God, that the temptations of young

men in this age are so exceedingly great, and she has seen so many of the young gentlemen of her acquaintance so shamefully degenerate, that she wipes her tears for the sons she has buried, and composes her soul to patience and thankfulness, with one only daughter remaining. Perhaps God has by this stroke prevented a thousand unknown sorrows. Are your sons dead? But are all your mercies dead too? A worthy husband is a living comfort; and may God preserve and restore him to you with joy! Food, raiment, safety, peace, liberty of religion, access to the mercy seat, hope of heaven; all these are daily matters of thankfulness. Good madam, let not one sorrow bury them all. Show that you are a christian by making it to appear, that religion has supports in it which the world doth not know. What can a poor worldling do, but mourn over earthly blessings departed, and gone down with them comfortless to the grave? But methinks a christian should lift up his head, as partaking of higher hopes. May the blessed spirit be your comforter, madam. Endeavour to employ yourself in some business or amusement of life continual-

ly, lest a solitary and inactive frame of mind tempt you to sit brooding over your sorrows, and nurse them to a dangerous size. Turn your thoughts often to the brighter scenes of heaven and the resurrection.

Forgive the freedom of a stranger, madam, who desires to be the humble and faithful servant of Christ and souls. Isaac Watts.

P. S. Madam, you have so many excellent comforters around you, that I even blush to send what I have writ; yet since the narrowness of my paper has excluded two or three thoughts, which may not be impertinent or useless on this mournful occasion, I will insert them here. You know, madam, the great and blessed God had but one son, and he gave him up a sacrifice, and devoted him to a bloody death out of love to such sinners as you and I. Can you shew your gratitude to God in a more evident and acceptable manner, than by willingly resigning your sons to him at the call of his providence? This act of willing resignation turns a painful affliction into a holy sacrifice. Are the two dearest things taken from the heart of a mother?

Then may you ever set so much the looser to this world, and you have the fewer dangerous attachments to this life. It is a happiness for a christian not to have the heart strings tied too fast to any thing beneath God and heaven. Happy is the soul, who is ready to remove at the divine summons. The fewer engagements we have on earth, the more we may live above, and have our thoughts more fixed on things divine and heavenly. May this painful stroke be thus sanctified, and lead you nearer to God. I. W.

LETTER XXIV.

An original letter from the late countess of Hertford, afterwards duchess of Somerset, on the death of her only son George lord viscount Beauchamp, who died of the small pox at Bologne in Italy, September 11th, 1744, written to the rev. dr. B—.

SIR,

I AM very sensibly obliged by the very kind compassion you express for me under my heavy afflictions. The meditations you have favoured me with afford the strongest motives for consolation that can be offered to a

person under my unhappy circumstances. The dear lamented son I have lost was the pride and joy of my heart, but I hope I may be the more easily excused for having looked on him as such, since he was not so from the outward advantages he possessed, but from the virtues and rectitude of his mind. The prospects which flattered me in regard to him were not drawn from his distinguished rank or from the beauty of his person, but from the hope that his example would have been serviceable to the cause of virtue, and would have shewn the younger part of the world that it was possible to be cheerful without being foolish or vicious, and to be religious without severity or melancholy. His whole life was one uninterrupted course of duty and affection to his parents, and when he found the hand of death upon him his only regret was to think of the agonies that must rend their hearts; for he was perfectly contented to leave the world, as his conscience did not reproach him with any presumptuous sins, and he hoped his errors would be forgiven. Thus he resigned his innocent soul into the

hands of his merciful creator on the evening of his birth-day which completed him nineteen. You will not be surprised sir that the death of such a son should occasion the deepest sorrow, yet at the same time it leaves us the most comfortable assurances that he is far happier than our fondest wishes could have made him; which must enable us to support the remainder of years which it shall please God to allot for us here, without murmuring or discontent, and quicken our endeavours to prepare ourselves to follow him in that happy place, where our dear, valuable child is gone before us. I beg the continuance of your prayers, and am, sir, yours, &c.

1744. F. HERTFORD.

LETTER XXV.

From rev. mr. Whitfield to mr. G. H. dated Oxon, July 18, 1734.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING heard the melancholy news of your brother's death, I could not help sending you a line, to let you know how much I am concerned. Indeed, I cannot say, I am so

much grieved on his account, as for that sorrow, which the loss of so valuable a youth must necessarily occasion to all his relations. No! I rather envy him in his blessed condition. He, unquestionably is divinely blessed, whilst we are still left behind to wrestle with unruly passions, and by a continued looking unto Jesus, and running in our christian race, to press forward to that high prize, of which he, dear youth, is now in full fruition. These are my true sentiments about his death; I leave you to judge then, whether I had need be concerned on his account; and surely was it to be put to your choice, whether so religious a young man should live or die, no one could be so cruel, as to wish to detain him from his wished-for glory. Be not then too much concerned at his death, but let us rather learn that important lesson, which his whole life taught us: "That there is nothing comparable to an early piety." I thought to have spent many agreeable hours with him in christian and edifying conversation, when I came to Gloucester; but he is gone to more agree-

able company, and long before now has joined the heavenly choir.

I shall only add, that as your brother imitated our blessed saviour in his life, so I pray God, he may resemble him in his death, and be a means, like his beloved redeemer, of reconciling all former animosities, which is the hearty wish of, dear sir,

Your sincere friend and humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER XXVI.

From rev. mr. Hervey to a friend, dated Weston, Dec. 17. 1747.

DEAR SIR,

I TRULY commisserate your variegated calamity; and heartily wish I could suggest any thing, which might be the means of administering some ease to your afflicted mind, and of assisting you to reap ample benefit from your distressed situation.

You well know, that all afflictions of what kind soever, proceed from God: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these

things," Is. xlv. 7. They spring not from the dust ; are not the effects of a random chance, but the appointment of an all-wise, all-foreseeing God, who intends them all for the good of his creatures.—This, I think, is the fundamental argument for resignation, and the grand source of comfort. This should be our first reflection, and our sovereign support, —He that gave me my being, and gave his own son for my redemption, he has assigned me this suffering.—What he ordains, who is boundless love, must be good : what he ordains, who is unerring wisdom, must be proper.

This reconciled Eli to the severest doom that ever was denounced.—" It is the Lord ;" and though grievous to human nature, much more grievous to parental affection, yet it is unquestionably the best ; therefore, I humbly acquiesce. I kiss the awful decree, and say from my very soul, " Let him do what seemeth him good," 1 Sam. iii. 18.

This calmed the sorrows of Job, under all his unparalleled distresses ; the Lord gave my affluence and prosperity ; the Lord has

taken all away ; rapacious hands and warring elements, were only his instruments, therefore, I submit, I adore, I bless his holy name.

This consolation fortified the man Christ Jesus, at the approach of his inconceivably bitter agonies ; " The cup which, not my implacable enemies, but my father by their administration has given me, shall I not drink it ?"—It is your father, dear sir, your heavenly father, who loves you with an everlasting love, that has mingled some gall with your portion in life.—Sensible of the beneficent hand, from which the visitation comes, may you always bow your head in patient submission ; and acknowledge with the excellent, but afflicted monarch Hezekiah, " Good is the word of the Lord concerning me," 2 Kings xx. 19.

All afflictions are designed for blessings.—To do us good at the latter end, however they may cross our desires, or disquiet our minds at present.—" Happy," says the spirit of inspiration, and not wretched, " is the man whom God correcteth." (Job v. 7.) And for this reason, because his merciful chasten-

ings, though " not joyous but grievous, yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.) God's ways are not as our ways. The children whom we love, we are apt to treat with all the soft blandishments, and fond caresses of profuse indulgence; and too, too often humour them to their hurt, if not to their ruin. —But the Father of spirits is wise in his love, and out of kindness severe. Therefore it is said, " Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. xii. 6.) Would you not, dear sir, be a child of that everlasting father, whose favour is better than life? Affliction is one sign of your adoption to this inestimable relation.—Would you not be an " heir of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ?"—Affliction is your path to this blissful patrimony. " Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven," Acts xiv. 22. Would you not be made like your ever-blessed and amiable redeemer? He was a man of sorrows, and ac-

quainted with grief; and every disciple must expect to be as his master.

Perhaps, you may think your affliction peculiarly calamitous: and that if it had been of some other kind, you could more cheerfully submit, more easily bear it; but you are in the hands of an all-wise physician, who joins to the bowels of infinite love, the discernment of infinite wisdom. He cannot mistake your case. He sees into the remotest events; and though he varies his remedies, always prescribes with the exactest propriety to every one's particular state. Assure yourself, therefore, the visitation which he appoints, is the very properest recipe in the dispensatory of heaven: any other would have been less fit to convey saving health to your immortal part, and less subservient to your enjoyment of the temporal blessings, which may, perhaps, be yet in store for you.

Should you enquire what benefits accrue from afflictions?—Many and precious—They tend to wean us from the world—When our paths are strewed with roses, when nothing but music and odours float around, how apt are we to be enamoured with our present con-

dition, and forget the crown of glory, forget Jesus and everlasting ages?—But affliction with a faithful, though harsh voice, rouses us from the sweet delusion.—Affliction warns our hearts to arise and depart from these inferior delights, because here is not our rest. True and lasting joys are not here to be found. The sweeping tempest and the beating surge, teach the mariner to prize the haven, where undisturbed repose waits his arrival. In like manner disappointments, vexations, anxieties, crosses, teach us to long for those happy mansions, where all tears will be wiped away from the eyes, Rev. xxi. 4. all anguish banished from the mind; and nothing, nothing subsist, but the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Afflictions tend to bring us to Christ.—Christ has unspeakable and everlasting blessings to bestow—such as the world can neither give, nor take away; such as are sufficient to pour that oil of gladness into our souls, which will swim above the waves of any earthly tribulation.—But are we not, dear sir, are we not most unhappily indolent and

inattentive to these blessings, in the gay hours of an uninterrupted prosperity ?—It is very observable, that scarce any made application to our divine redeemer, in the days of his abode with us, but the children of affliction. The same spirit of supineness still possesses mankind. We undervalue, we disregard the lord Jesus, and the unspeakable privileges of his gospel, while all proceeds smoothly, and nothing occurs to discompose the tenour of our tranquillity.—But when misfortunes harass our circumstances, or sorrows oppress our minds ; then we are willing, we are glad, we are earnest, to find rest in Christ.

In Christ Jesus there is pardon of sins.—Sin is a burthen, incomparably sorer than any other distress.—Sin would sink us into the depths of eternal ruin, and transfix us with the agonies of endless despair. But Christ has, at the price of his very life, purchased pardon for all that fly to him. He has borne the guilt of their sins in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Have they deserved condemnation ? He has sustained it in their stead.—Are they obnoxious to the wrath of

God ? He has endured it, as their substitute. He has made satisfaction, complete satisfaction for all their iniquities. Rom. iii. 25. 26. So that justice itself, the most rigorous justice, can demand no more. Oh ! that distresses may prompt us to prize this mercy ! may incite us to desire ardently this blessedness ! Then it will be good for us to have been afflicted. Psal. cxix. 71.

Christ has obtained for us the gift of the holy spirit, Gal. iii. 2., to sanctify our hearts, and renew our natures.—An unrenewed carnal mind, is ten thousand times more to be lamented, more to be dreaded, than any external calamities. And nothing can cure us of this most deadly disease, but the sanctification of the spirit. This divine spirit alone is able to put the fear of God in our souls, and awaken the love of God in our hearts. Jer. xxxii. 40. His influences suggest such awful and amiable thoughts to our minds, as will be productive of these christian graces. This sacred principle subdues our corruptions, and conforms us to our blessed redeemer's image.—How is this

best gift of heaven disteemed by the darlings of the world, who have nothing to vex them? But how precious is it, how desirable, to the heirs of sorrow?—They breathe after it, as the thirsty hart panteth for the water brooks.—They cannot be satisfied without its enlightening, purifying, cheering communications. This is all their request, and all their relief, that the spirit of Christ may dwell in their hearts, Rom. viii. 9.; may enable them to possess their souls in patience, Luke xxi. 19. and derive never-ending good from momentary evils. Before I close these lines, permit me to recommend one expedient, which yet is not mine, but the advice of an inspired apostle, "If any be afflicted, let him pray."—Dear sir, fly to God in all your adversity, pour out your complaints before him in humble supplication, and shew him your trouble. Psalm. cxlii. 2. —When I am in heaviness, says a holy sufferer, I will think upon God, Psal. lxi. 2. his omnipotent power, his unbounded goodness, whose ear is ever, ever open to receive the cry of the afflicted.—When the psalmist was distressed on every side, without were

fightings, within were fears, the throne of grace was his place of refuge; "I give myself to prayer," Psal. cix. 3, was his declaration.—This method we read Hannah took, and you cannot but remember the happy issue, 1 Sam. i. 10. Let me intreat you to imitate these excellent examples; frequently bend your knees, and more frequently lift up your heart, to the father of mercies and God of all consolation; not doubting, but that through the merits of his dear son, through the intercession of your compassionate high priest, he will hear your petitions, will comfort you under all your tribulations, and make them all work together for your infinite and eternal good.

In the mean time I shall not cease to pray, that the God of all power and grace may vouchsafe to bless these considerations, and render them as balm to your aching heart, and as food to the divine life in your mind. I am, dear sir, with much esteem, compassion, and respect,

Your very sincere wellwisher, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

From mr. Boyse to the reverend mr. Hervey.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

FOR your tender admonitions and excellent advice, I am truly indebted to you; as they discover a generous and compassionate concern for my better part.—I bless God, I have reason to hope, that great work is not to do; for of all the marks of infatuation I know amongst men, there can be none equal to that of trusting to a deathbed repentance.

I do not pretend to vindicate my own conduct—nor can I ever forget the very christian sense of my condition and misfortunes, which, notwithstanding all my misbehaviour, you have so pathetically expressed. The follies of my youth have furnished a plentiful harvest of reflection for my latter years; as I have been now for a long time in a manner buried from the world, so it has been my endeavour to spend that time in lamenting my past errors, and in pursuing a course of life void of offence towards God and man.

* Mr. Boyse died soon after he wrote this letter.

I have learnt to trust in God as my only portion, to bless him for his fatherly corrections, which have been much gentler than my demerit; and by which I have been taught to know him and myself; his infinite mercy and goodness, my own ingratitude and unworthiness; so that I may truly say with the returning prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son."

My health is in a very precarious state; and the greatest hopes of recovery I have, which are very small, arise from warm weather and the country air.—I thank God I am absolutely resigned to his holy and blessed will. I have seen enough of the vanity and folly of earthly things, and how insufficient they are to satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. I am sensible of my own wretchedness and nothingness, and that my only hope of salvation is through the blessed redeemer, who died to save lost sinners.—This is my rock of hope against an approaching eternity.

May you long, sir, taste those true and unfading pleasures, which attend the practice

of religion and virtue ; and may you, by your shining example, be a means of turning many to righteousness. This is the sincere and ever grateful wish of

Your most obliged, and
faithful servant, &c.

LETTER XXVIII.

From dr. Samuel Johnson. March 17, 1752, O. S.

DEAR SIR,

NOTWITHSTANDING the warnings of philosophers, and the daily examples of losses and misfortunes, which life forces upon us, such is the absorption of our thoughts in the business of the present day—such the resignation of our reason to empty hopes of future felicity, or such our unwillingness to foresee what we dread, that every calamity comes suddenly upon us, and not only presses as a burden, but crushes as a blow.

There are evils which happen out of the common course of nature, against which it is no reproach not to be provided. A flash of lightning intercepts the traveller in his way.

The conclusion of an earthquake heaps the ruins of cities upon their inhabitants. But other miseries time brings, though silently, yet visibly forward, by its own lapse, which yet approach unseen, because we turn our eyes away, and they seize us unresisted, because we would not arm ourselves against them, by setting them before us.

That it is in vain to shrink from what cannot be avoided, and to hide that from ourselves which must sometimes be found, is a truth which we all know, but which all neglect, and perhaps none more than the speculative reasoner, whose thoughts are always from home, whose eye wanders over life, whose fancy dances after meteors of happiness kindled by itself, and who examines every thing rather than his own state.

Nothing is more evident, than that the decays of age must terminate in death. Yet there is no man, says Tully, who does not believe that he may yet live another year, and there is none who does not, upon the same principle, hope another year for his parent or his friend; but the fallacy will be in time de-

tected ; the last year, the last day, will come : it has come, and is past.—' The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects.'

The loss of a friend, on whom the heart was fixed, and to whom every wish and endeavour tended, is a state of desolation in which the mind looks abroad impatient of itself, and finds nothing but emptiness and horror. The blameless life, the artless tenderness, the native simplicity, the modest resignation—the patient sickness and the quiet death, are remembered only to add value to the loss—to aggravate regret for what cannot be amended, to deepen sorrow for what cannot be recalled.

These are the calamities by which providence gradually disengages us from the love of life. Other evils fortitude may repel, or hope may mitigate, but irreparable privation leaves nothing to exercise resolution, or flatter expectation. The dead cannot return, and nothing is left us here but languishment and grief.

Yet such is the course of nature, that whoever lives long must outlive those whom he

loves and honours. Such is the condition of our present existence, that life must one time lose its associations, and every inhabitant of the earth must walk downward to the grave alone and unregarded, without any partner of his joy or grief, without any interested witness of his misfortunes or success. Misfortunes indeed he may yet feel, for where is the bottom of the misery of man! but what is success to him, who has none to enjoy it? Happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another.

We know little of the state of departed souls, because such knowledge is not necessary to a good life. Reason deserts us at the brink of the grave, and gives no further intelligence. Revelation is not wholly silent. 'There is joy among the angels in heaven over a sinner that repenteth.' And surely the joy is not incommunicable to souls disentangled from the body, and made like angels.

Let hope, therefore, dictate what revelation does not confute—that the union of souls may still remain; and that we, who are struggling

with sin, sorrow, and infirmities, may have one part in the attention and kindness of those who have finished their course, and are now receiving the reward.

These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion. When we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and greater power? And to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the greatest power is the best?

Surely there is no man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light! The precepts of Epicurus, which teach us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but not content, us. The dictates of Zeno, who commands us to look with indifference on abstract things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promise of him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurances of

another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped from our eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but religion only can give patience. SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER XXIX.

A copy of a letter from the dean of Canterbury, dr. Tillotson, (afterwards archbishop) to a friend, who lay very ill of a languishing distemper, whereof he died.

SIR,

I AM sorry to understand by mr. T—'s letter to my son, that your distemper grows upon you, and that you seem to decline so fast. I am very sensible how much easier it is to give advice against trouble, in the case of another, than to take it in our own. It hath pleased God to exercise me of late with a very sore trial, in the loss of my dear and only child; in which, I do perfectly submit to his good pleasure, firmly believing, that he always does what is best; and yet, though reason be satisfied, our passion is not so soon appeased: and when nature has received a wound, time must be allowed for the healing

of it. Since that God hath thought fit to give me a nearer summons, and a closer warning of my mortality, in the danger of an apoplexy; which yet, I thank God for it, hath occasioned no very melancholy reflections; but this, perhaps, is more owing to natural temper than philosophy and wise consideration. Your case, I know is very different, who are of a temper naturally melancholy, and under a distemper apt to increase it, for both which great allowances are to be made.

And yet, methinks, both reason and religion do offer to us, considerations of that solidity and strength, as may very well support our spirits, under all the frailties and infirmities of the flesh; such as these, that God is perfect love and goodness; that we are not only his creatures, but his children, and as dear to him as to ourselves; that he does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men; and that all evils and afflictions which befal us, are intended for the cure and prevention of greater evils of sin, and punishment; and therefore we ought not only to submit to them with patience, as being deserved by us, but to

receive them with thankfulness, as being designed by him to do us that good, and to bring us to that sense of him and ourselves, which, perhaps, nothing else would have done; that the sufferings of this present life are but short and slight, compared with that extreme and endless misery, which we have deserved; and, with that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which we hope for in the other world; that if we be careful to make the best preparation we can, for death and eternity, whatever brings us nearer to our end, brings us nearer to our happiness, and how rugged soever the way be, the comfort is, that it leads to our father's house, where we shall want nothing that we can wish. When we labour under a dangerous distemper that threatens our life, what would we not be content to bear, in order to a perfect recovery, could we be assured of it? And should we not be willing to endure much more, in order to happiness, and that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised? Nature, I know, is fond of life, and apt to be still lingering after a longer continuance here; and yet

a long life, with the usual burdens and infirmities of it, is seldom desirable; it is but the same thing over again, or worse, so many more days or nights, summers and winters; a repetition of the same pleasures, but with less pleasure and relish every day; a return of the same, or greater pains and trouble, but with less patience and strength to bear them.

These, and the like considerations, I use to entertain myself withal, and not only with contentment, but comfort, though with great inequality of temper, at several times, and with much mixture of human frailty, which will always stick to us, while we are in this world. However, by this kind of thoughts, death becomes more familiar to us, and we shall be able by degrees, to bring our minds close up to it, without startling at it. The greatest tenderness I find in myself, is, with regard to some near relations, especially the dear and constant companion of my life, which, I must confess, doth very sensibly touch me; but then I consider, and so I hope will they also, that this separation will be but for a little while, and that, tho' I shall leave

them in a bad world, yet under the care and protection of a good God, who can be more, and better to them, than all other relations, and will certainly be so to them that love him, and hope in his mercy.

I shall not need to advise you what to do, and what use to make of this time of your visitation; I have reason to believe, that you have been careful in the time of your health, to prepare for this evil day, and have been conversant in those books which give the best directions to this purpose, and have not, as so many do, put off the great work of your life, to the end of it; and then you have nothing now to do, but, as well as you can, under your present weakness and pains, to renew your repentance, for all the errors and miscarriages of your life, and earnestly to beg God's pardon and forgiveness of them, for his sake who is the propitiation for our sins; to comfort yourself in the goodness and promises of God, and the hopes of that happiness you are ready to enter into; and in the mean time, to exercise faith and patience for a little while, and be of good courage, since

you see land; the storm you are in will be quickly over, and then it will be as if it never had been, or rather the remembrance of it will be a pleasure.

I do not use to write such long letters; but, I do heartily compassionate your case, and should be glad if I could suggest any thing that might help to mitigate your trouble, and make that sharp and rough way, through which you are to pass into a better world, a little more smooth and easy. I pray to God to fit us both for that great change, which we must once undergo; and, if we be but in any good measure fit for it, sooner or later makes no great difference. I commend you to the father of mercies, and God of consolation, beseeching him to increase your faith and patience, and to stand by you in your last and great conflict; and that, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you may fear no evil; and when your heart fails, and your strength fails, you may find him the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever. Farewell, my good friend, and while we are here, let us pray for one another,

that we may have a joyful meeting in another world. I rest, sir,

Your truly affectionate
friend and servant,
JN. TILLOTSON.

LETTER XXX.

From Thomas Wilkinson to mrs. Smith, of Coniston, on the death of her daughter Elizabeth Smith.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WILL it be an intrusion on the sacredness of thy sorrow, thus to address thee? I have heard of thy loss, and can truly say, I sympathise therein. I have awoke in tears in the night, to meditate on the affecting event; and the thoughts of my friend and precious daughter are frequently my companions by day. Many are now my recollections of dear Elizabeth; her sweet and serious countenance is often so vivid in my remembrance, that I sometimes can hardly think I shall see her no more. How unsearchable are the ways of the Almighty! He frequently selects the wisest and the best for himself, whilst

the "world lying in wickedness" seems to want their example and reproof, and the virtuous and drooping christian their encouragement and support. Yet we are not to question his ways; for surely they are in wisdom, though that wisdom we cannot comprehend. Never let us forget, my friend, that this is a state of trial. Affliction and trial will terminate in the grave, and if we are faithful to the last, we shall rise in happiness. I have had no particulars of the trying event. When thou hast strength to write, it would be desirable to know how thou and Juliet are, and whether thy husband, or any branch of the family, were at Coniston during the solemn scene. Thy lot has often been to bear the heaviest part of the burthen. I shall devote the rest of my paper to a little memorial of its kind to thy valued daughter.

Farewell! With true esteem and affection, I remain thy sincere and sympathising friend.

T. W.

LETTER XXXI.

From the late General Varnum to his lady, written a few days before his death.

MY DEAREST AND MOST AMIABLE FRIEND,

I NOW write to you from my sick chamber, and perhaps it will be the last letter you will ever receive from me. My lungs are so far affected, that it is impossible for me to recover, but by a change of air and warmer climate. I expect to leave this place on sunday or monday next for the falls of Ohio. If I feel myself mended by the tour, I shall go no further, but if not, and my strength shall continue, I expect to proceed to Neworleans, and from thence by the Westindies to Rhodeisland. My physicians, most of them, think the chance of recovery in my favour. However, I am neither elevated nor depressed by the force of opinion, but shall meet my fate with humility and fortitude.

I cannot, however, but indulge the hope, that I shall again embrace my lovely friend in this world ; and that we may glide smoothly

down the tide of time for a few years, and enjoy together the more substantial happiness and satisfaction, as we have already the desirable pleasures of life.

It is now almost nineteen years since heaven connected us by the tenderest and most sacred ties, and it is the same length of time, that our friendship hath been increased, by every rational, and every endearing motive; it is now stronger than death; and I am firmly persuaded will follow us into an existence of never ending felicity. But, my lovely friend, the gloomy moment will arrive when we must part; and should it arrive during our present separation, my last and my only reluctant thoughts will be employed about my dearest Patty.

Life, my dearest friend, is but a bubble; it soon bursts, and is remitted to eternity. When we look back to the earliest recollection of our youthful hours, it seems but the last period of our rest, and we appear to emerge from a night of slumbers to look forward to real existence. When we look forward, time appears as indeterminate as eternity, and we

have no idea of its termination, but by the period of our dissolution.

What particular connexion it bears to a future state, our general notions of religion cannot point. We feel something constantly active within us, that is evidently beyond the reach of mortality; but whether it be a part of ourselves, or an emanation from the pure source of existence; or reabsorbed when death shall have finished his work, human wisdom cannot determine. Whether the demolition of the body introduces only a change in the manner of our being, and leaves us to progress infinitely, alternately elevated or depressed, according to the propriety of our conduct, or whether only we return into the common mass of unthinking matter, philosophy hesitates to decide.

I know, therefore, but one source from whence can be derived complete consolation in a dying hour; and that is, the divine system contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There life and immortality are brought to light; there we are taught that our existence is to be eternal; and, secure of an interest in

the atoning merits of a bleeding saviour, that we shall be inconceivably happy. A firm, unshaken faith in this doctrine, must raise us above the doubts and fears that hang upon every other system, and enable us to view with calm serenity, the approach of the king of terrours; and to behold him, as a kind indulgent friend, spending his shafts only to carry us the sooner to our everlasting home. But should there still be a more extensive religion beyond the veil, and without the reach of mortal observation, the christian religion is by no means shaken thereby, as it is not opposed to any principle, that admits the perfect benevolence of the deity. My only doubt is, whether the punishments, threatened in the New Testament, are annexed to a state of unbelief, which may be removed hereafter, and so a restitution take place; or whether the state of the mind at death irretrievably fixes its doom forever. I hope and pray that the divine spirit will give me such assurances of an acceptance with God, through the death and sufferings of his son, as to brighten the way to immediate happiness.

Dry up your tears, my charming mourner; nor suffer this letter to give you too much inquietude. Consider the facts at present but as in theory, but the sentiments such as will apply whenever the great change shall come.

I know that humanity must and will be indulged in its keenest griefs; but there is no advantage in too deeply anticipating our inevitable sorrows.

If I did not persuade myself, that you would conduct with becoming prudence and fortitude upon this occasion, my own unhappiness would be greatly increased, and perhaps my disorder too; but I have so much confidence in your discretion, as to unbosom my inmost soul.

You must not expect to hear from me again until the coming spring, as the river will soon be shut up with ice, and there will be no communication from below, and if in a situation for the purpose will return as soon as practicable.

Give my sincerest love to all those you hold dear; I hope to see them again, and to love them more than ever. Adieu, my dearest,

dearest friend! and while I fervently devote, in one undivided prayer, our immortal souls to the care, forgiveness, mercy, and all prevailing grace of heaven, in time and through eternity, I must bid you a long, long, long farewell.

JAMES M. VARNUM.

Marietta, Dec. 18, 1788.

LETTER XXXII.

Copy of a letter from hon. Robert Treat Paine, to mrs. Duncan and dr. and mrs. Fiske.

DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE just heard with distressing sympathy of the death of your endearing Andrew,

"O empty name
Of earthly bliss, 'tis all an airy dream."

I do not recollect that I ever saw a child, which, in every point of view, more engaged my affections and expectations. But why should I enhance your affliction by displaying the magnitude of your loss! Yet why should I conceal those endearments, which add such keenness to my sympathy?

Such is the tenure of human life! "Man cometh forth as a flower and is cut down:"

some in the bloom of youth, and some when withered with age. In vain do we expect happiness from man whose breath is in his nostrils. On his creator only can he place that hope of happiness which shall never be disappointed. Though clouds, and thick distressing darkness are round about him, yet righteousness, goodness, and mercy continually surround his throne. The ways of providence are not only unsearchable, but most suitable for our trust and acquiescence. Who can foretel the future destiny of the most promising child in a progress through a long life, viewed either in a natural or moral light? Infirmities or misfortunes may render the life of the virtuous and agreeable, uncomfortable or distressing; and vice may destroy every foundation of agreeableness or hopes of future happiness. But an early transit from this life in the bloom of innocence, however much it may wound our feelings, yet opens to us the satisfactory expectations of a sure entrance into that state where no trouble afflicts, or vice pollutes. On such an occasion may we not recollect that passage in the 4th

chapter of the apochryphal book of Wisdom, ' for honorable age is not that which standeth in length of time or is measured by number of years ; but wisdom is the grey hair to man, and an unspotted life is old age. He was taken away speedily, lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul.'

When we recollect the innocence, the submission, and teachable disposition of the dear departed, are we not led to understand the meaning of those expressive words of the saviour of mankind " Except ye be converted and become like little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Though nature weeps (and by her laws she must weep under such afflictions) yet let reason and all the christian graces rise superior and administer comfort, till we arrive where the friends of piety and benevolence shall meet. A few short days at most and we shall reap the good fruit of afflictions rightly improved. Let not the distress of nature obstruct the improvement of our minds.

Receive these cursory thoughts as flowing

from the respect which I have for you, and as a testimony that I am

Your sympathizing friend,
and humble servant,
ROBT. TREAT PAINE.

Boston, July 12. 1802.

LETTER XXXIII.

Copy of a letter from David Osgood, D. D. to judge Phillips of Andover, on the death of his son Samuel.

Medford, 11 *Feb.* 1796.

DEAR SIR,

I WRITE, not because I think, that I, or any other of your numerous friends can bring to your recollection any topick of consolation, which does not already mingle with the multitude of your thoughts. Those from reason are obvious to every thinking mind; and those from revelation cannot escape the enlightened christian. But such is our frame, that the hardness of trouble is somewhat softened, and our tears seem to flow with more ease, when we know that our friends weep in sympathy with us.

Before I was a parent, I tried to enter into the feelings of my friends and people, when mourning the loss of promising children. I have since found, that the utmost result of such attempts bore but the proportion of the shadow to the substance. Now that I have children of my own, I am conscious of a set of feelings towards them, which nothing, but their existence, could have produced. Apprehensions of what may befal them are daily rising in my mind. They are sometimes presented to my thoughts, as orphans, while yet of a tender age, left without a guide or protector in this insnaring world. At another time, I imagine them, through sickness or casualty, withering like the mown grass, and all my hopes concerning them swallowed up in the grave. Again I think of them in a light still more melancholy, as liable to a perversity of disposition, which all my efforts may be unable to correct, and which may threaten consequences to their present and future well being too dreadful for imagination to contemplate.

From the disquietude of such apprehensions, when they bear upon the mind, the

greatest relief results from committing them to Him, who has made, preserves, and redeemed them; and whose guardianship alone can prove effectual for their safety. What is my relation to them, or my interest in them, compared with his? If he has implanted in my bosom such tenderness towards them, can I suspect him, as wanting compassion for the work of his hands, and hitherto the objects of his unceasing care and kindness? Whether numbered among the living or the dead, they are still *his* whose claim to and regard for them I have no pretence to question or to rival.

That I am allowed to look up, and, not without hope, to ask of him the unspeakable gift of eternal life for myself, is the greatest privilege afforded me in this state of sin and death. Next to this, and nearly equal to it, is that of preferring the same request for those, who are dear to me, especially for my children. Indeed it is often the case, that, while my prayers for personal mercies are culpably languid, the entrance of these objects into my thoughts presently moves my affections, and animates my devotions. When the

heart thus freely and fervently pours forth its fears and desires to him, who is able to do abundantly above what the kindest and wisest earthly parent can ask or think, the burden of anxiety is sensibly lightened.

You are not a stranger to exercises of this kind. Nay, I fully believe your experience in them to be much greater than mine. You were not at ease and unapprehensive, when trouble came. What has taken place, you have feared a thousand times; and, under the impression of this fear, have been often repeating the dedication of your children, renewedly presenting them in the arms of faith and prayer to him, whose you acknowledge them to be, and at whose disposal, you chose, on the whole, that they should be.

The recollection of these things may and ought to have a consoling influence on the present occasion. Providence has now discharged you from all further thought with respect to the object removed. Whatever in him promised usefulness and happiness in life is a rational ground of hope concerning him in death. If the separation be painful, at

longest it can be but short. A few more days and nights, summers and winters, and we shall be gathered to our deceased fathers and children, brethren and friends. Many considerations offer themselves to your thoughts of weight sufficient, no doubt, to satisfy your reason; though they may not immediately quiet the tumult of passion. To heal the wound, which nature has received, time is necessary. I am the more concerned for you, on account of your slender health, which greatly unfits one to bear up under the heavier shocks of adversity. I pray God to proportion strength to your trial, and to give you and your mourning consort those strong consolations, which are so graciously provided for us in the gospel of his Son.

These expressions of condolence you will accept, as the effusions of your sincere and sympathising friend, DAVID OSGOOD.

FINIS.

CONSTITUTION.

The Constitution and Regulations of the "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, Piety and Charity," as amended May 30, 1810, stand thus:

ENTERTAINING the hope, that the cause of christianity may be promoted by the adoption and execution of a plan for publishing and dispersing religious tracts of several descriptions, selected and original, a number of ministers and friends of religion have associated themselves for this interesting purpose. They cherish a belief that such a work, undertaken and pursued with enlightened and humble views, and a sincere regard to the interests of christian truth, piety, and charity, may prove highly beneficial. It will furnish information and reasoning relating to the evidences of divine revelation, and the best methods of interpreting the oracles of God, and tending to explain and illustrate the object and spirit, the doctrines and duties of our holy religion. By the same method may

not vital and practical christianity be advanced? May not attention be hence excited to religious and moral truth, a lukewarm spirit among professors counteracted, hurtful prejudices removed, uncharitable heats prevented and allayed, and peace and harmony diffused over social life and christian communities? And may not parents and heads of families, instructers of youth, and ministers of religion, be assisted and animated in discharging their respective duties, upon which, under God, the influence of the gospel very much depends?

PLAN AND REGULATIONS.

1. The principal design of the Christian Monitor society is the publishing and distributing of a religious periodical work, entitled, The Christian Monitor.

2. The Society shall meet annually in Boston, on the day immediately preceding that of general election in Massachusetts.

3. At the annual meeting all the officers shall be chosen by ballot, viz. A president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and eight trustees.

4. In the annual election of the trustees, four new ones at least shall be chosen.

5. The president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer of the society shall form part of the trustees, five of whom shall make a quorum for transacting business.

6. It shall be the duty of the trustees of the society to meet at Boston four times in the year, viz. on the day after their election ; on the day before Harvard College Commencement ; and on the first Thursdays of December and March ; to elect at their first meeting four members from their own body, who with the secretary shall constitute the Publishing Committee ; to elect an anniversary preacher ; to devise and execute measures for defraying the expense of the work, and for increasing the Society's funds ; to expend the interest of said funds in purchasing and gratuitously circulating numbers of the Monitor among the poor, the young, and the seriously inclined, in such a manner as, in their judgment, shall best accomplish the objects of the Society ; to admit members, to prosecute by all laudable means the benefit of the institution; and to make an annual report of their doings to the Society.

7. It shall be the duty of the Publishing Committee, who shall meet as often as they please, having the entire superintendence of the publication, to avoid as much as possible, in all numbers of the Monitor, points of controversy, and to confine their attention to the evidences, the essential doctrines, and institutions of our religion, and to the important duties of the christian character ; that the work

may contribute to receive and promote the genuine temper and spirit of the gospel, and to advance the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy.

8. Any person, desirous of becoming a member of this Society, shall be nominated by a member of the same to the trustees, a majority of whom shall determine his election.

9. Each member shall annually pay into the hands of the treasurer a sum not less than two dollars, for promoting the objects of the institution.

10. Every member of the society on paying his annual assessment, is entitled to one copy of each number of the Monitor, as it shall be published.

11. The Society will gratefully receive benefactions and extraordinary subscriptions, which shall be faithfully appropriated towards multiplying copies of the Monitor, and bestowing them gratis on those, who shall appear to be proper objects of this charity.

12. A catalogue of the members and such reports and papers as the trustees may judge proper, shall be published yearly in a number of the Monitor.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

AT THE SHAKSPEARE BOOKSTORE, CORNHILL.

Vol. I. of Lempriere's Universal Biography, printed verbatim from the London Quarto Edition, which cannot be imported under $24. In 2 large octavo vols. containing about 1300 pages of close letter-press, $3 a vol. to subscribers. The execution of this work is equal to the English edition.

The 7 first vols. of the British Essayists, to be completed in 60 vols one vol. a fortnight—containing The Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, Rambler, Adventurer, World, Connoisseur, Idler, Lounger, Observer, Looker-On, the Lover and Reader, by Steele, the Essays of Shenstone, Knox and Goldsmith; the Babbler, Microcosm, and Olla Podrida; Fitzosborn's Letters, and Lyttelton's Dialogues.

The Life of Miss Elizabeth Smith, with her translations of the Letters of Klopstock, in 2 vols.

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